

# MÉMOIRES D'OUTRE-TOMBE

François de Chateaubriand



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TRANSLATED BY A.S. KLINE

"I will be Chateaubriand or nothing." – Victor Hugo

# MÉMOIRES D'OUTRE-TOMBE

François de Chateaubriand

ANNO DOMINI 1848

## SICUT NUBES... QUASI NAVES... VELUT UMBRA:

As the cloud ([Job 7:9](#))... like ships... ([9:26](#))... as a shadow... ([14:2](#))

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PRODUCED BY JOEL RAUPE  
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ANNO DOMINI 2015;  
JUNE 18<sup>TH</sup> - 200<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE DEFEAT OF THE TYRANT AT WATERLOO  
AND UNTIL JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> THE 238<sup>TH</sup> YEAR  
OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

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## TESTAMENTARY PREFACE

Paris, 1st December 1833

As it is impossible for me to foresee the moment of my death; as, at my age, the days granted to man are only days of grace, or rather of hardship, I intend, for fear of being taken by surprise, to explain the nature of a work destined to beguile for me the boredom of these last lonely hours, that no one wants, and that one does not know how to employ.

The *Mémoires*, at whose head this preface is placed, embrace or will embrace the entire course of my life: they were begun in the year 1811, and have been continued down to today. I recount in what has been completed, and will recount in what has only been sketched out so far, my childhood, my education, my youth, my entry into the service, my arrival in Paris, my presentation to Louis XVI, the opening scenes of the Revolution, my travels in America, my emigration to Germany and England, my return under the Consulate, my occupations and works under the Empire, and finally the complete history of that Restoration and its fall.

I have met almost all the men who have played a large or small role, both abroad and in my own country, from Washington to Napoleon, from Louis XVIII to Czar Alexander, from Pius VII to Gregory XVI, from Fox, Burke, Pitt, Sheridan, Londonderry, and Capo-d'Istria, to Malesherbes, Mirabeau, etc.; from Nelson, Bolivar, Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt, to Suffren, Bougainville, La Pérouse, Moreau, etc. I have formed one of an unprecedented triumvirate: three poets of different interests and nationalities, found themselves, almost at the same moment, Foreign Ministers: myself of France, Mr. Canning of England, and Señor Martinez de la Rosa of Spain. I have traversed in succession the empty years of my youth, the full years of the Republican era, the splendors of Napoleon and of the reign of the Legitimacy.

I have no more than four or five contemporaries of established fame still around me. Alfieri, Canova and Monti are gone: Italy retains only Pindemonte and Manzoni from its days of brilliance, Pellico has spent his best years in the dungeons of Spielberg; the talents of Dante's native land are condemned to silence, or forced to languish on foreign soil: Lord Byron and Mr. Canning died young: Walter Scott has left us, Goethe has quit us loaded with glory and years. France has almost nothing left now of her rich past; she begins a new era: I remain to bury my age, like the old priest who, at the sack of Béziers, had to ring the bell before dying himself when the last citizen had expired.

When death lowers the curtain between me and the world, it will be found that my drama is divided into three acts.

From my early youth until 1800, I was a soldier and traveller; from 1800 to 1814, under Consulate and Empire, my life was literary; from the Restoration until the present day my life has been political.

In my three successive careers, I have always set myself a great task: as a traveller, I wished to open up the Polar regions; as a writer I tried to re-establish religion on its own ruins; as a statesman I endeavored to give the nations the true system of constitutional monarchy with its various freedoms: I have at least helped to win that which equals all of them, can take their place, and stands instead of a constitution, the freedom of the Press. If I have often failed in my enterprises, it has been in my case the fault of destiny. Foreigners who have succeeded in their projects have been favored by fortune: they had powerful friends supporting them, and a country at peace: I have not had that happiness.



Of the modern French authors of my age, I am almost the only one whose life resembles his works: traveller, soldier, poet, publicist, it was in the forest that I sang of forests, aboard ship that I described the sea, in camp that I spoke of weapons, in exile that I learned about exile, at court, in assemblies, amongst public affairs, that I studied princes, politics, law and history. The orators of Greece and Rome were involved in public life and shared its destiny. In the Italy and Spain of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the foremost geniuses of literature and the arts participated in social evolution. What stormy and beautiful lives, those of Dante, Tasso, Camoëns, Ercilla and Cervantes!

In France, our ancient poets and historians wrote and sang in the midst of pilgrimages and battles: Thibault IV, Comte de Champagne, Villehardouin, Joinville, owe the felicities of their style to the adventures they lived: Froissart searched for history on the high roads, learned it from the knights and priests he met, with whom he rode. But from the reign of Francis I, our writers have been isolated individuals whose talents could express the spirit but not the events of their time. If I were destined to survive, I would represent in person, as they are presented in my *Mémoires*, the principles, ideas, events, catastrophes, the epic of my time, all the more so because I have seen a world begin and end, and the opposing characteristics of that end and that beginning are involved in my opinions. I found myself between two centuries as at the confluence of two rivers; I plunged into their troubled waters; regretfully leaving the ancient strand where I was born, and swimming hopefully towards the unknown shore where new generations will land.

These *Mémoires*, divided into books and chapters, were written at different dates and in different places: these divisions naturally give rise to a species of prologue that recall the incidents which have occurred since the previous dates, and describe the places in which I pick up the thread of my story. The varied events and changing forms of my life thereby involve one another: so, in moments of prosperity I speak of times of poverty, and in days of tribulation recall days of happiness. The varied sentiments of my various years, my youth penetrating my old age, the gravity of my years of maturity saddening my green years; the rays of my sun from its rising to its setting, crossing and meeting like separate reflections of my existence, give a kind of indefinable unity to my work: my cradle speaks of my tomb, my tomb of my cradle; my sufferings become pleasures, my pleasures sorrows, and one does not know if these *Mémoires* are the work of a young head or an old one.

I am not saying a word of this to justify myself, since I am not sure it is a good idea: I say what is, what happened, without consideration, through the very inconstancy of the tempests unleashed against my barque, and which have frequently left me only the reef on which I have been shipwrecked to write this or that fragment of my life.

I have shown a paternal partiality towards these *Mémoires*; I would like to come back to life at the witching hour to correct the proofs: *the dead are in haste*.

The notes that accompany the text are of three kinds: the first, placed at the end of the books, consist of *clarifications and written proofs*; the second, at the foot of the pages, are from the same period as the text; the third similarly at the foot of the pages, have been added since the composition of the text, and carry the place and date where they were written. One or two years of solitude in some corner of the earth would suffice to complete these *Mémoires*; but I have had no peace except for the nine months when my being lay in my mother's belly: it is probable that I shall never recover that ante-natal peace, except in the womb of our communal mother, after death.

Several of my friends have urged me to publish part of my story now; I could not accede to their wish. Firstly, despite myself, I would inevitably be less frank and truthful, and secondly I have always imagined I was writing while seated in my coffin. The work has acquired from that a certain religious quality which I could not remove without doing harm; it would pain me to suppress that distant voice from the tomb that can be heard throughout the whole course of my tale. It will not seem strange if I defend certain weaknesses; if I am preoccupied with the fate of a poor orphan, destined to remain after me on earth. If I have suffered enough in this world to be a happy shade in the next, a little light from the Elysian Fields, illuminating my last portrait, may serve to render the artist's failings less obvious: life suits me ill; perhaps death will become me better.

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER 1

La Vallée-aux-Loups, near Aulnay, this 4th October 1811.

It is four years now since, on my return from the Holy Land, I bought a gardener's house, hidden among the wooded hills, close to the hamlet of Aulnay, in the neighborhood of Sceaux and Châtenay. The uneven, sandy ground attached to the house was no more than an overgrown orchard, with a ravine and a clump of chestnut-trees at its far end. This narrow space seemed appropriate to contain my wide-ranging hopes; *spatio brevi spem longam reseces* (since time is short, limit that far-reaching hope). The trees I've planted here have prospered: they are still so small that I overshadow them when I step between them and the sun. One day, repaying me that shade, they will protect my old age as I protect their youth. As far as possible I have selected them from the various climes where I have wandered; they recall my travels, and nourish new illusions in the depths of my heart.

If ever the Bourbons return to the throne, I will ask as recompense for my loyalty, only that they enrich me enough to join the edge of the surrounding woods to my property: ambition possesses me; I would like to extend my walks by a few acres: knight-errant though I am I have the sedentary habits of a monk: since inhabiting this retreat, I don't think I have set foot outside my close three times. If my pines, firs, larches and cedars ever fulfil their promise, the Vallée-aux-Loups will become a veritable charterhouse. When Voltaire was born at Châtenay, on 20th February 1694, what did this hillside look like where in 1807 the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme* was to retire?

The place pleases me; since, for me, it has replaced my ancestral fields; I have paid for it with the products of my dreams and my waking hours; it is to the great wilderness of *Atala* that I owe the little wilderness of Aulnay; and to create this refuge I have not, like the American settlers, despoiled the Florida Indians. I am attached to my trees; I have addressed elegies, sonnets, and odes to them. There is not one of them that I have not tended with my own hands, that I have not rescued from root-beetles, from caterpillars glued to its leaves; I know them all by name as if they were my children: they are my family, I have no other, and I hope to die among them.

Here, I wrote *Les Martyrs*, *Les Abencerages*, *L'Itinéraire* and *Moïse*; what shall I do now with these autumn evenings? This 4th October 1811, the anniversary of my name day and my entry into Jerusalem, tempts me to commence the story of my life. The man who gives France power over the world today, only to trample her underfoot, that man, whose genius I admire, and whose despotism I abhor, that man envelops me with his tyranny as with another solitude; but though he crushes the present, the past defies him, and I remain free, in everything that preceded his glory.

Most of my feelings remain buried deep in my heart, or have only been revealed in my works as if applied to imaginary beings. Now that I miss my chimeras, without pursuing them, I want to revive the inclinations of my best years: these *Mémoires* will be a mortuary temple erected by the light of my memories.

My father's birth and the ordeals he endured in his early life, endowed him with one of the most sombre characters there has ever been. This character influenced my ideas by terrifying my childhood, saddening my youth, and determining the nature of my upbringing.

I was born a gentleman. As I see it, I have profited from this accident of the cradle, maintaining that firm love of liberty that especially belongs to an aristocracy whose last hour has struck. Aristocracy has three successive ages: the age of superiority, the age of privilege, the age of vanity; leaving the first behind it degenerates in the second and expires in the last.

Anyone can enquire about my family, if the fancy takes them, in Moréri's dictionary, in the various histories of Brittany by D'Argentré, Dom Lobineau and Dom Morice, in the *Histoire généalogique du plusieurs maisons illustres de Bretagne* by Père Dupaz, in Toussaint Saint-Luc, Le Borgne, and finally in the *Histoire des grands officiers de la Couronne*, by Père Anselme. (This genealogy is summarized in the *Histoire généalogique et héraldique des Pairs de France, des grands dignitaires de la Couronne*, by Monsieur Le Chevalier de Courcelles.)

The proofs of my lineage were established by Chérin, for the admission of my sister Lucile as a canoness to the Chapter of L'Argentière, from which she was to pass to that of Remiremont; they were produced for my presentation to Louis XVI, again for my affiliation to the Order of Malta, and again, for the last time, when my brother was presented to that same unfortunate Louis XVI.

My name was first written as *Brien*, then as *Briant* and *Briand*, through an invasion of French orthography. Guillaume le Breton gives it as *Castrum-Briani*. There isn't a name in France free of such variations. What is the correct spelling of Du Guesclin?

About the beginning of the eleventh century the Briens gave their name to an important château in Brittany, and the château became the seat of the barony of Chateaubriand. The original arms of Chateaubriand were pine-cones with the device: *Je sème l'or* (I scatter gold). Geoffroy, Baron de Chateaubriand travelled to the Holy Land with St Louis. Taken prisoner at the battle of the Massorah, he returned to France, his wife Sibylle dying of joy at the shock of seeing him again. St Louis, as a reward for his services, granted him and his heirs, in exchange for their ancient coat of arms, a shield of gules, powdered with golden fleurs-de-lys: *Cui et ejus haeredibus*, states a cartulary in Bérée Priory, *sanctus Ludovicus tum Francorum rex, propter eius probitatem in armis, flores lilii auri, loco pomorum pini auri, contulit*.

The Chateaubriands split into three branches from the very start: the first, known as the Barons de Chateaubriand, and the root-stock of the other two, originating in the year 1000 in the person of Thiern, son of Brien, grandson of Alain III, Count or Leader of Brittany: the second, named the Seigneurs des Roches Baritaut, or Seigneurs du Lion d'Angers; and the third going under the name of the Sires de Beaufort.

When the line of the Sires de Beaufort ended, in the person of Dame Renée, one Christophe II a collateral branch of this line held a share of land at La Guérande en Morbihan. At this time, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, there was widespread confusion in the ranks of the nobility, names and titles having been usurped. Louis XIV ordered an enquiry, in order to re-establish everyone's rights. Christophe was maintained in possession, on proof of his descent from ancient nobility, of his title, and his coat of arms, by order of the Tribunal established at Rennes in order to re-validate the nobility of Brittany. The order was dated 16th September 1669; with this text:

*'Order of the Tribunal established by the King (Louis XIV) for the re-establishment of the nobility in Brittany, given 16th September 1669: Between the King's Attorney-General and Monsieur Christophe de Chateaubriand, Sieur de La Guérande: the which declares the aforesaid Christophe to be of noble extraction, and permits him to adopt the rank of Chevalier, and maintains his right to*

*bear arms, of gules powdered with golden fleurs-de-lys, to any number, and this after the production by him of his authentic titles, of which there here appear, etc., etc., the aforesaid order signed by Malescot.*

This order confirms that Christophe de Chateaubriand de la Guérande was directly descended from the Chateaubriands who were Sires de Beaufort: the Sires de Beaufort being linked by historical documents to the first Barons de Chateaubriand. The Chateaubriands of Villeneuve, Plessis and Combours are cadet branches of the Chateaubriands of La Guérande, as is shown by the descendants of Amaury, brother of Michel, which Michel was the brother of Christophe de La Guérande, his lineage confirmed by this order of reformation of the nobility, given above here, of 16th September 1699.

After my presentation to Louis XVI, my brother thought to augment my fortune as a younger son by providing me with some of those ecclesiastical benefits known as *bénéfices simples*. There was only one practical means of achieving this, since I was a layman and a soldier, which was to enroll me in the Order of Malta. My brother sent my proofs to Malta, and soon afterwards a request in my name, to the Chapter of the Grand Priory of Aquitaine, sitting at Poitiers, asking that commissioners be appointed to pronounce on the matter, urgently. Monsieur Pontois was at that time the archivist, Vice-Chancellor and genealogist of the Order of Malta at the Priory.

The President of the Chapter was Louis-Joseph des Escotais, Bailiff and Grand Prior of Aquitaine, assisted by the Bailiff of Freslon, the Chevalier de La Laurencie, the Chevalier de Murat, the Chevalier de Lanjemet, the Chevalier de La Bourdonnay-Montluc, and the Chevalier du Bouëtiez. The request was granted on the 9th, 10th and 11th of September 1789. It was said, in the terms of admission of the *Mémorial*, that I deserved the favor I was soliciting on more than one ground, and that considerations of the greatest weight made me worthy of the honor I requested.

And all this took place after the taking of the Bastille, on the eve of the scenes of 6th October 1789, and the transfer of the Royal Family to Paris! And in the session of the 7th August of that year 1789, the National Assembly had abolished the titles of the nobility! How did the Chevaliers and examiners of my credentials come to the conclusion that I deserved the favor I was soliciting on more than one ground, etc., I who was merely an insignificant second-lieutenant of infantry, unknown, without credit, favor or fortune?

My brother's eldest son (I am adding this in 1831 to my original text written in 1811), Comte Louis de Chateaubriand, had married Mademoiselle d'Orglandes, by whom he had five daughters and a son, named Geoffroy. Christian, younger brother of Louis, great-grandson and godchild of Monsieur de Malesherbes, and with a striking resemblance to him, served with distinction in Spain as a captain in the Dragoon Guards, in 1823. He has become a Jesuit in Rome. The Jesuits compensate for solitude to the extent that they relinquish the earth. Christian nears death at Chieri, near Turin: old and ill, I should precede him; but his virtues ought to call him to heaven before me, who still have plenty of faults to bemoan.

By the division of the family patrimony, Christian inherited the estate of Malesherbes, and Louis the estate of Combours. Christian not considering the equal division legitimate, wished, in turning his back on the world, to relinquish the worldly goods that did not belong to him and gave them to his elder brother.

In view of my lineage, it would be my affair alone if I were to inherit my father's and brother's conceit in believing myself a younger scion of the Dukes of Brittany, descended from Thiern, grandson of Alain III.

The aforesaid Chateaubriands have twice mingled their blood with the blood of the English sovereigns, Geoffroy IV de Chateaubriand having taken as his second wife Agnès de Laval, grand-daughter of the Count of Anjou and Matilda, daughter of Henry I; Marguerite de Lusignan, widow of the English King, and grand-daughter of Louis-le-Gros, was married to Geoffroy V, twelfth Baron de Chateaubriand. Regarding the Spanish royal race we find Brien, younger brother of the ninth Baron de Chateaubriand, who was married to Jeanne, daughter of Alphonse, King of Aragon. Regarding the great families of France, also, it is believed that Édouard de Rohan took to wife Marguerite de Chateaubriand, and that one Croy married Charlotte de Chateaubriand. Tinteniach, victorious in the Combat des Trente, and du Guesclin the Constable made alliance with us in all three branches. Tiphaine du Guesclin, grand-daughter of Bertrand du Guesclin's brother, ceded the ownership of Plessis-Bertrand to Brien de Chateaubriand, her cousin and heir. In the treaties, the Chateaubriands were assigned in order to guarantee the peace of the Kings of France, at Clisson, to the Baron de Vitré. The Dukes of Brittany sent the Chateaubriands the minutes of their assizes. The Chateaubriands became Grand Officers of the Crown, and *illustrious* at the court of Nantes; they received commissions to defend the security of their province against the English. Brien I fought at the Battle of Hastings: he was the son of Eudon, Comte de Penthievre. Guy de Chateaubriand was one of the Knights whom Arthur of Brittany assigned to accompany his sons during his embassy to Rome in 1309.

I would never finish if I were to recount everything of which I have chosen to give only a short summary: the note I intend to place at the end, out of consideration for my two nephews, who are no doubt as well versed as I am in these old woes, will replace what I omit in this text. However, these days, people go a little too far; it has become common to declare that one is working class, that one has the honor of being the son of a man of the soil. Are these boasts as disinterested as they are philosophical? Are they not a way of siding with the stronger party? The Marquesses, Counts and Barons of our day, possessing neither land or privileges, three-quarters of them dying of hunger, denigrating one another, refusing to recognize one another, challenging one another's titles; these nobles, whose own names are denied them, or who are only granted one with reservations, can they inspire fear? However I wish to be pardoned for having been obliged to descend to these puerile recitations, in order to explain my father's ruling passion, a passion which formed the crux of my youthful drama. For my part, I neither glorify nor complain of the old social order or the new. If, in the first, I was the Chevalier or Vicomte de Chateaubriand, in the second I am François de Chateaubriand; I prefer my name to my title.

My father would readily, like a great medieval land-owner, have called God *the Gentleman up there*, and named Nicodemus (the Nicodemus of the Gospels) a *holy gentleman*. Now, passing by way of my begetter, we arrive at Christophe, sovereign lord of La Guérande, and descend in direct line from the Barons of Chateaubriand to myself, François, vassal-less, penniless Lord of the Vallée-aux-Loups.

Going back through the lineage of the Chateaubriands, and its three branches, two of the branches died out, while the third, that of the Sires de Beaufort, extended by a branch (the Chateaubriands of La Guérande), grew poorer, an inevitable consequence of the country's laws: the elder sons

appropriated two thirds of the estate, according to Breton custom; the younger sons divided a mere third of the paternal inheritance between them. The erosion of the latter's meagre inheritance occurred all the more rapidly through marriage; and as the same distribution of two to one also applied to their offspring, the younger sons of younger sons swiftly arrived at the division of a pigeon, a rabbit, a duck-pond and a hunting dog, though they still remained *noble knights and powerful lords* of a dove-cote, a toad-hole, and a rabbit-warren. In the old aristocratic families you find a quantity of younger sons: tracing them through two or three generations, then they vanish, descending little by little to the plough, or absorbed by the working classes, without anyone knowing what has become of them.

The head of the family in name, and arms, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was Alexis de Chateaubriand, Lord of La Guérande, the son of Michel, which Michel had a brother Amaury. Michel was the son of that Christophe, confirmed in his lineage from the Sires de Beaufort and Barons de Chateaubriand by the previously mentioned order. Alexis de la Guérande was a widower; a confirmed drunkard, spending his days in drink, living in disorder amongst his servants, and employing the noblest title-deeds of his house to cover jars of butter.

Contemporary with this head of the family in name and arms, there lived his cousin François, the son of Amaury, younger brother of Michel. François, born on the 19th February 1683, possessed the little estates of Les Touches and La Villeneuve. He married, on the 27th August 1713, Pétronille-Claude Lamour, Dame de Lanjégu, by whom he had four sons: François-Henri, René (my father), Pierre, Lord of Le Plessis, and Joseph, Lord of Le Parc. My grandfather, François, died on the 28th March 1729; my grandmother, whom I knew in my childhood, still had beautiful smiling eyes in the shadow of her old age. At the time of her husband's death she was living in the manor of La Villeneuve, near Dinan. My grandmother's whole fortune did not exceed 5,000 livres in rents, of which her eldest son took two-thirds, 3,333 livres; 1,667 livres remained for the three younger sons, from which sum the eldest once more deducted the major part.

To complete the misery, my grandmother was thwarted in her plans by her sons' characters: the eldest François-Henri, on whom the magnificent estate of Villeneuve devolved, refused to marry and became a priest; but instead of applying for the benefices his name could have procured and with which he might have supported his brothers, he sought nothing, out of pride and indifference. He buried himself in a country living and was successively rector of Saint-Launeuc and Merdrignac in the diocese of Saint-Malo. He had a passion for poetry; I have seen a good number of his verses. The jovial character of this sort of aristocratic Rabelais, the cult of the Muses practiced by this Christian priest in a presbytery excited curiosity. He gave away all he owned and died bankrupt.

The last of the four brothers Joseph went to Paris and immured himself in a library: ever year he received 416 livres, his portion as a younger son. He went unnoticed in the world of books; he devoted himself to historical research. Throughout his short life, he wrote to his mother every January 1st, the only sign of existence he ever gave. *Singular destiny!* There were my two uncles, the one a scholar, the other a poet; my elder brother wrote quite good verse; one of my sisters, Madame de Farcy, had the true poetic gift; another of my sisters, Comtesse Lucile, a canoness, deserves to be known for a few admirable pages; while I have blotted plenty of paper. My brother perished on the scaffold, my two sisters quitted a life of suffering after languishing in prison; my two uncles failed to leave enough to pay for the four planks of their coffin; while literature has caused me joy and pain, and with God's help I still look forward to dying in the workhouse.

My grandmother, worn out trying to make something of her eldest and youngest sons, could do nothing for the other two, René, my father, and Pierre, my uncle. This family which has '*scattered gold*', according to its motto, could see from its country seat the rich abbeys it had founded, and which enclosed its ancestors. It had presided over the States of Brittany, being possessed of one of the nine baronies; it had added its signature to the treaties between sovereigns, served as surety for Clisson, and still lacked the influence to obtain a second-lieutenant's commission for the heir to its name.

The one recourse left to the poverty-stricken Breton nobility was the Royal Navy: they decided to take advantage of it in my father's case; but it meant him going to Brest, living there, paying his instructors, buying his uniform, weapons, books, mathematical instruments: how to defray all these expenses? The commission requested from the Minister for the Navy failed to arrive, for want of a patron to solicit its dispatch: the lady of Villeneuve fell ill with grief.

Then my father showed the first sign of that determined character that I later recognized in him. He was about fifteen years old: becoming aware of his mother's anxiety, he approached the bed where she lay and said: I don't wish to be a burden on you, any longer.' At this my grandmother began to cry (I've heard my father describe this scene a score of times). '*René*,' she replied, '*what would you do? Cultivate your field.*' '*It can't feed us all: let me go.*' '*Ah well*,' said his mother, '*go then, wherever God wishes you to go.*' She embraced him, in tears. That very evening my father quitted his mother's farm and went to Dinan where one of our relations gave him a letter of recommendation to a citizen of Saint-Malo. The orphan adventurer was signed on as a volunteer, on an armed schooner, which set sail a few days later.

The little republic of Saint-Malo at that time upheld the honor of the French flag at sea. The schooner rejoined the fleet that Cardinal Fleury was sending to aid Stanislas, besieged in Danzig by the Russians. My father set foot on shore and found himself in the memorable battle that fifteen hundred Frenchmen, commanded by the brave Breton De Bréhan, Comte de Plelo, waged on the 29th May 1734, against forty thousand Muscovites, commanded by Munich. De Bréhan, diplomat, warrior, poet, was killed, and my father wounded twice. He returned to France and signed on again. Shipwrecked on the coast of Spain, he was attacked and despoiled by robbers in Galicia; he took passage by ship to Bayonne, and appeared once more beneath the family roof. His courage and his disciplined nature had made him known. He sailed to the West Indies; he enriched himself in the colonies, and laid the foundations of a new family fortune.

My grandmother entrusted to her son René her son Pierre, Monsieur Chateaubriand du Plessis, whose son, Armand de Chateaubriand, was shot, on Bonaparte's orders, on Good Friday of 1809. He was one of the last French nobles to die for the Monarchist cause. My father undertook to look after his brother, though he had contracted, from habitual suffering, a rigidity of character which he retained all his life; Virgil's *Non ignara mali* is not always true: adversity may engender harshness as well as tenderness.

Monsieur de Chateaubriand was tall and gaunt; he had an aquiline nose, thin pale lips, and small deep-set eyes, sea-green or glaucous, like those of lions or barbarians of old. I have never seen eyes like his: when anger filled them the glittering pupils seemed to detach themselves and issue forth to strike you like bullets.



One passion alone gripped my father, that of his name. His habitual state was a profound sadness that age deepened, and a silence that he only emerged from to vent his anger. Avaricious, in the hope of restoring his family to its former glory, haughty with the nobles at the States of Brittany, harsh with his vassals at Combours, taciturn, despotic and menacing at home, seeing him one felt fear. If he had lived to experience the Revolution, and if he had been younger, he would have played an important part, or been massacred in his château. He certainly possessed genius: I have no doubt that in charge of the administration or the army he would have proved an extraordinary man.

It was on his return from America that he decided to marry. Born on the 23rd September 1718, he married at thirty-four, on the 3rd July 1753, Apolline-Jean-Suzanne de Bedée, born the 7th April 1726, the daughter of Monsieur Ange-Annibal, Comte de Bedée, Liege Lord of La Bouëtardais. He established himself with her at Saint-Malo, twenty miles or so from where they had both been born, so that from their house they could see the horizon under which they had entered the world. My maternal grandmother, Marie-Anne de Ravenel de Boisteilleul, Madame de Bedée, born at Rennes on the 16th October 1698, had been brought up at Saint-Cyr during the last years of Madame Maintenon: her education was passed on to her daughters.

My mother, endowed with plenty of spirit and a prodigious imagination, had been formed by reading Fénelon, Racine, and Madame de Sévigné, and fed with anecdotes of Louis XIV's court; she knew the whole of Cyrus by heart. Apolline de Bedée, with large features, was small, dark, and plain; the elegance of her manners and the liveliness of her temperament contrasted with my father's severity and calm. Loving society as much as he loved solitude, as high-spirited and animated as he was cold and unmoving, she had not a single taste that was not opposed to those of her husband. The opposition she experienced made her melancholy, instead of happy and light-hearted. Obligated to be silent when she would have wished to speak, she compensated for it with a kind of noisy sadness broken by sighs, which alone interrupted my father's mute sadness. In piety, my mother was an angel.

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER 2

Birth of my brothers and sisters - I arrive in the world.

La Vallée-aux-Loups, 31st December 1811.

My mother gave birth at Saint-Malo to a son who died in infancy, and who was named Geoffroy, like nearly all the eldest sons in my family. This son was followed by another and by two daughters who lived only a few months.

These four children died of a rush of blood to the brain. Finally, my mother brought a third boy into the world, named Jean-Baptiste: it was he who later became the grandson-in-law of Monsieur de Malesherbes. After Jean-Baptiste four daughters were born: Marie-Anne, Bénigne, Julie and Lucile, all four of rare beauty: and of whom only the two eldest survived the storms of the Revolution. Beauty that serious frivolity remains when all the rest have gone. I was the last of these ten infants. It is probable that my four sisters owe their existence to my father's desire to see his name secured by the arrival of a second boy; I tarried, I had an aversion for life.

Here is my baptismal certificate:

*'Extract from the civil register of the Commune of Saint-Malo for the year 1768.*

*François-René de Chateaubriand, son of René de Chateaubriand and Pauline-Jeanne Suzanne de Bedée, his wife, born on the 4th of September 1768, baptized on the following day by us, Pierre-Henry Nouail, Vicar-General to the Bishop of Saint-Malo. Stands godfather, Jean-Baptiste de Chateaubriand his brother, and godmother, Françoise-Gertrude de Contades, who sign with the father. As signatories to the register: Contades de Plouër, Jean-Baptiste de Chateaubriand, Brignon de Chateaubriand, De Chateaubriand and Nouail, Vicar-General.'*

One sees that I was mistaken in my writings: I set myself down as being born on the 4th October not the 4th September; my Christian names are François-René, and not François-Auguste.

The house my parents occupied at that time is situated in a dark, narrow street in Saint-Malo, called the Rue des Juifs: today the house has been converted into an inn. The room in which my mother gave birth overlooks a deserted stretch of the city walls, and from the windows of that room one can perceive the sea, stretching as far as the eye can see, breaking on the reefs. My godfather, as one can see from my baptismal certificate, was my brother, and my godmother was the Comtesse de Plouër, daughter of the Maréchal de Contades. I was near death when I entered the world. The roaring of the waves, whipped up by a squall heralding the autumn equinox, prevented my cries being heard: these details have often been told to me; their sadness has never been erased from my memory. There is never a day that, thinking of what I have been, I do not picture again in my thoughts the rock on which I was born, the room where my mother inflicted life on me, the tempest whose roaring lulled my first sleep, the unfortunate brother who named me, with a name that I have almost always trailed amidst misery. Heaven seems to have brought these diverse circumstances together in order to place an image of my destiny over my cradle.

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER 3

Plancoët – A Vow – Combours – My father's scheme for my education – La Villeneuve – Lucile –  
Mesdemoiselles Couppart – A bad scholar

La Vallée-aux-Loups, January 1812.

Emerging from my mother's womb, I suffered my first exile; they relegated me to Plancoët, a pretty village situated between Dinan, Saint-Malo and Lamballe. My mother's only brother, the Comte de Bedée, had built the Château of Monchoix close to the village. My maternal grandmother's property in the region extended as far as the little market town of Corseul, the *Curiosolites* of Caesar's *Commentaries*. My grandmother, long a widow, lived with her sister Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul, in a hamlet separated from Plancoët by a bridge, and called *L'Abbaye*, because of the Benedictine abbey, sacred to Our Lady of Nazareth.

My wet nurse was found to be sterile; another poor Christian took me to her breast. She dedicated me to the patroness of the hamlet, Our Lady of Nazareth, and promised her I would wear blue and white in her honor until I was seven. I was only a few hours old, and the burden of time had already marked my brow. Why did they not let me die? It entered into God's counsels to answer the vow, made in obscurity and innocence, with the preservation of a life which idle fame threatened to extinguish.

That vow, of the Breton peasant-woman, is no longer of our century: it was however a touching thing, which a divine Mother's intercession established between a child and Heaven, sharing the concerns of the earthly mother.

After three years I was taken back to Saint-Malo; it was already seven years since my father had regained the Combours estate. He wished to enter again into the possessions his ancestors had held; unable to negotiate for the lordship of Beaufort, which had passed to the Goyon family, nor the barony of Chateaubriand, which had fallen to the house of Condé, he turned his gaze towards Combours, which Froissart calls *Combours*: several branches of my family had owned it through marriages with the Coëtquens. Combours defended Brittany against the Normans and the English: Junken, Bishop of Dol, built it in 1016; the great tower dates from 1100. Marshal de Duras, who had Combours from his wife, Maclovie de Coëtquen, daughter of a Chateaubriand, came to an arrangement with my father. The Marquis du Hallay, an officer in the mounted grenadiers of the Royal Guard, who is almost too well known for his bravery, is the last of the Coëtquen-Chateaubriands: Monsieur du Hallay has a brother. The same Marshal du Duras, acting as our relation by marriage, later presented my brother and myself to Louis XVI.

I was destined for the Royal Navy: disdain for the court was natural to all Bretons, and particularly my father. The aristocracy of our States reinforced the sentiment in him.

When I was brought back to Saint-Malo, my father was at Combours, my brother at the College of Saint-Brieuc; my four sisters were living with my mother.

All the latter's affections were concentrated on her eldest son; not that she failed to cherish her other children, but she showed a blind preference to the young Comte de Combours. It is true that as a boy, as a late-comer, as the *Chevalier* (so I was called), I had certain privileges compared to my sisters; but

ultimately I was left in the hands of servants. Moreover my mother, full of wit and virtue, was preoccupied with the cares of society and the duties of religion. The Comtesse de Plouër, my godmother, was her intimate friend; she also knew Maupertuis' parents, and those of the Abbé Trublet. She loved politics; noise; the world: for one played politics at Saint-Malo as do the monks of Saba in the Ravine of Cedron; she threw herself into the La Chalotais affair with ardor. She brought to her household a tendency to scold, a distracted imagination, a parsimonious spirit, which at first prevented us recognizing her admirable qualities. Orderly herself, her children ran wild; though generous she gave an impression of avarice; a gentle soul she was always scolding; my father was the terror of the servants, my mother the scourge.

The first sentiments of my life arose from these characteristics of my parents. I was attached to the woman who cared for me, an excellent creature called La Villeneuve, whose name I write with a feeling of gratitude and tears in my eyes. La Villeneuve was a kind of superior nurse to the household, carrying me in her arms, secretly giving me anything she could find, wiping away my tears, kissing me, dropping me in a corner, picking me up again and muttering all the time: '*This one won't be proud! He's good-hearted! He's not hard on poor folk! Here, little fellow,*' and she would fill me with wine and sugar.

My childish affection for La Villeneuve was soon eclipsed by a worthier friendship.

Lucile, the fourth of my sisters, was two years older than me. A neglected younger daughter, her clothes were simply her sisters' cast-offs. Imagine a thin, little girl, too tall for her age, with gangling arms, a timid air, speaking with difficulty, and unable to learn a thing: give her a borrowed dress of a different size than her own; enclose her chest in a bony bodice whose points chafed her sides; support her neck with an iron collar trimmed with brown velvet; coil her hair on the top of her head, and hold it there with a toque of some black material; and you behold the wretched creature who struck my sight on returning to the paternal roof. No one would have suspected in this pitiful Lucile the talents and beauty that would one day illuminate her.

She was handed over to me like a toy; I did not abuse my power; instead of submitting her to my will, I became her defender. Every morning I was taken with her to the house of the Couppart sisters; two old hunchbacks dressed in black, who taught children to read. Lucile read very badly; I read even worse. They scolded her; I scratched the sisters; serious complaint was made to my mother. I began to pass as a good-for-nothing, a rebel, an idler, ultimately a donkey. These ideas became entrenched in my parents' minds: my father would say that all the Chevaliers de Chateaubriand had chased hares, were drunkards and brawlers. My mother sighed and grumbled on seeing the state of my jacket. Child though I was, my father's words made me bridle; when my mother crowned her remonstrance with a eulogy of my brother whom she called a *Cato*, a *hero*, I felt disposed to commit every wickedness that seemed expected of me.

My writing-master, Monsieur Després, with a sailor's wig, was no more satisfied with me than my parents were; he made me copy eternally, following a sample in his style, these two lines of verse that I held in horror, not through any fault in the language displayed:

*It is you, my spirit, to whom I wish to speak:  
You possess those failings which I cannot conceal.*

He accompanied these reprimands with blows from his fist which he landed on my neck, calling me a dizzard-head; did he mean dizzy? I don't know what a dizzard-head is, but I take it to be something horrible.

Saint-Malo is nothing but a rock. Once rising from the midst of a marsh, it became an island by the invasion of the sea, which, in 709, hollowed out the bay and set Mont Saint-Michel in the midst of the waves. Today, the rock of Saint-Malo is only connected to the mainland by a causeway called poetically *Le Sillon* (the Furrow). The Sillon is attacked on one side by the open sea: the other is washed by the tide which swings round it to enter the port. A storm almost destroyed it completely in 1730. During the hours of low tide the harbor is dry, and on the northern and eastern margins of the sea a beach of the finest sand is revealed. One can then make a tour around my paternal nest. Near and far are scattered rocks, forts, uninhabited islets: Fort-Royal, La Conchée, Cézembre, and Le Grand-Bé where my tomb will be; without knowing I chose well: *be*, in Breton, signifies a *tomb*.

At the end of the Sillon, set with a calvary, you find a mound of sand at the edge of the open sea. This mound is called La Hoguette; it is topped by an old gibbet: the uprights served for our games of *puss in the corner*; we disputed possession with the sea-birds. But it was not without a certain terror that we lingered in this spot.

There, the Miels are to be found also, dunes where sheep grazed; to the right are the meadows at the foot of Paramé, the post-road to Saint-Servan, the new cemetery, a calvary, and windmills on hillocks, like those which stand on Achilles' grave at the entrance to the Hellespont.

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER 4

Life of my maternal grandmother and her sister at Plancouët – My uncle the Comte de Bedée, at Monchoix – Release from my nurse's vow

I reached my seventh year; my mother took me to Plancoët, in order to be released from my wet nurse's vow; we stayed with my grandmother. If I have ever known happiness, it was certainly in that house.

My grandmother occupied, in the Rue du Hameau de L'Abbaye, a house whose gardens descended in terraces to a valley, at the bottom of which was a spring surrounded by willows. Madame de Bedée could no longer walk, but apart from that she had none of the disabilities of her age: she was a charming old lady, plump, white, neat, distinguished in appearance, with fine aristocratic manners, wearing old-fashioned pleated dresses and a black lace cap tied under the chin. Her wit was mannered, her conversation grave, her temperament serious. She was cared for by her sister, Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul, who resembled her only in her kindness. The latter was a thin little creature, playful, talkative and full of raillery. She had loved a certain Comte de Trémigon, who had vowed to marry her, but had then broken his promise. My aunt consoled herself by celebrating her love, for she was a poet. I often remember hearing her singing in a nasal voice, spectacles perched on her nose, while she embroidered double-cuffs for her sister, an apologia that began thus:

*A sparrow-hawk loved a warbler  
And, so they say, was loved by her.*

...which always seemed a strange thing to me for a sparrow-hawk to do. The song ended with the refrain:

*Ah! Trémigon, is the tale obscure?  
Toora-loora.*

*How many things in this world end like my aunt's love-affair in toora-loora!*

My grandmother trusted her sister with the running of the house. She dined at eleven in the morning, followed by her siesta; she woke at one; she was carried down the garden-terraces to the willows by the spring, where she knitted, surrounded by her sister, her children, and her grand-children. In those days old age was a dignity; today it is a burden. At four, she was carried back to the drawing-room; Pierre, the servant, set out a card-table; Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul rapped on the fire-back with the tongs and, a few moments later, three more old ladies appeared who came from the neighboring house at my great-aunt's summons. These three sisters were the Demoiselles Vildéneux; daughters of an impoverished gentleman, who instead of dividing their meagre inheritance enjoyed it in common, had never separated and never left their native village. Close to my grandmother since childhood, they lived next door and came every day at the agreed signal, sounded out on the fire-back, to play quadrille with their friend. The game began; the good ladies quarreled: it was the only event in their lives, the only time when the equanimity of their tempers altered. At eight, supper restored their serenity. Often my uncle De Bedée, with his son and three daughters, joined the old lady's supper. The latter told a thousand stories of the old days; my uncle, in turn, recounted the Battle of Fontenoy, in which he had taken part, and crowned his boasting with somewhat frank anecdotes which made the good ladies faint with laughter. At nine, with supper over, the servants entered; everybody knelt, and Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul said prayers aloud. At ten the whole house was asleep, except my grandmother, who was read to by her maid until one in the morning.

That society, the first I took note of in my life, is also the first that vanished from my eyes. I saw death enter that house of blessing and peace, render it more and more solitary, closing one door and then another which opened no longer. I saw my grandmother forced to renounce her quadrille, lacking her customary partners; I saw the number of her loyal friends diminish, until the day when she fell, the last. She and her sister had promised to summon each other if the one arrived before the other; they had kept their word and Madame de Bedée only survived Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul by a month. I am probably the only person in the world who knows that those people existed. Twenty times, since that day, I have made the same comment; twenty times social groups have formed around me and dissolved. The impossibility of continuance and duration in human relationships, the profound oblivion that follows us, the unconquerable silence that shrouds our grave and extends from there to cover our house, continually reminds me of the need for solitude. Any hand will do to gift us the glass of water that we may want in our death-fever. Ah! May it not be one too dear to us! For how shall we abandon without despair the hand that we have covered with kisses and that we would hold to our heart for eternity?

The Comte de Bedée's chateau was situated a league from Plancoët, in a pleasant elevated position. Everything there breathed joy; my uncle's good humor was inexhaustible. He had three daughters, Caroline, Marie and Flore, and a son, the Comte de la Bouëtardais, a councillor in the High Court, who all shared his lightness of heart. Monchoix was full of cousins from the neighbourhood; there was music, dancing, hunting, merrymaking from morning to night. My aunt, Madame de Bedée, seeing my uncle cheerfully consuming his capital and revenue, quite reasonably grew angry with him; but nobody listened, and her bad humor increased the family's good humor; particularly as my aunt was herself subject to a host of fads: she always had a large fierce hunting dog cradled in her lap, and a tame boar following her that filled the château with its grunts. When I came to this house of festivity and noise from my father's house, so sombre and silent, I found myself in a veritable paradise. The contrast became more striking once my family were settled in the country: to travel from Combourg to Monchoix, was to travel from the desert into the world, from the keep of a medieval baron to the villa of a Roman prince.

On Ascension Day 1775, I left my grandmother's house, with my mother, my great-aunt De Boisteilleul, my uncle De Bedée and his children, my nurse and my foster-brother, for Notre-Dame de Nazareth. I was wearing a long white robe, white shoes, gloves and hat, and a blue silk sash. We reached the Abbey at ten in the morning. The monastery, sited by the roadside, was dated by a quincunx of elms from the time of Jean V of Brittany. The cemetery was entered through the quincunx: a Christian could not reach the church except by traversing this region of tombstones: it is through death that we arrive in God's presence.

The monks were already in their stalls; the altar was illuminated by a host of candles; lamps hung from the various arches: in Gothic buildings there are perspectives and, so to speak, successive horizons. The beadles came to meet me, ceremoniously, at the door, and conducted me to the choir. Three chairs had been set out: I took my place on the middle one; my nurse sat on my left; my foster-brother on my right.

The mass commenced: at the offertory the priest turned towards me and read out certain prayers; after which my white clothes were removed, and hung as an ex-voto beneath an image of the Virgin. I was then dressed in a purple habit. The prior delivered a discourse on the efficacy of vows; he recalled the tale of that Baron de Chateaubriand who travelled to the East with Saint Louis; he told me that I might also perhaps visit, in Palestine, that Virgin of Nazareth to whom I owed my life through the intercession of the prayers of the poor, always effective before God. This monk, who recounted to me the history of my

family, as Dante's grandfather told him the history of his ancestors, could, like Caggiaguida, have also added a prophecy of my exile.

*Tu proverai sì comme sa di sale  
Lo pane altrui, e com' è duro calle  
Lo scendere e il salir per l'atrui scale.*

*E quel che più ti graverà le spalle,  
Sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia,  
Con la qual tu cadrai in questa valle:*

*Che tutta ingrata, tutta matta ed empia  
Si farà contra a te; .....*

*Di sua bestialitate il suo processo  
Farà la prova: sì che a te fia bello  
L'averti fatta parte per te stesso.*

§

*You'll prove how salt the taste, there  
Of another's bread, how hard the path  
To climb and to descend another's stair.*

*And what will most weigh on your back  
Will be that company, vicious and bad,  
With which you'll fall into that crack,*

*For all of them ungrateful, impious, mad  
Will be against you; .....*

*Their careers will prove their brutishness  
So that it will be a worthy thing for you  
To have made a party of one of yourself.*

After the Benedictine's exhortation, I always dreamt of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and in the end I accomplished it.

I have been dedicated to religion; the garments of my innocence have rested on its altars: it is not my clothing that should be hung there today, in its temples, but my sufferings.

I was brought back to Saint-Malo. Saint-Malo is not the *Aleth* of the *Notitia Imperii*: Aleth was more likely sited by the Romans in the suburb of Saint-Servan, in the naval harbor called *Solidor*, at the mouth of the Rance. Opposite Aleth was a rock, *est in conspectus Tenedos* ('Tenedos is in sight'), not the refuge of perfidious Greeks, but the retreat of the hermit Aaron, who in 507 made his home on the island; it is the date of Clovis' victory over Alaric; one founded a little hermitage, the other a great empire, monuments equally vanished.

Malo, in Latin *Maclovius*, *Macutus*, *Machutes*, having become Bishop of Aleth in 541, drawn there as he was by the celebrated Aaron visited him. Chaplain of that hermit's oratory, after the death of the saint, he



built a monastic church, *in proedio Machutis* (on land belonging to Machutis). The name Malo was transferred to the island, and afterwards to the town *Maclovium*, *Maclopolis*.

From Saint-Malo, first Bishop of Aleth, to Saint Jean surnamed de la Grille, appointed in 1140, who built the cathedral, there were forty-five bishops. Aleth having been almost completely destroyed in 1172, Jean de la Grille transferred the Episcopal *See* of the Roman town to the Breton town which developed on Aaron's rock.

Saint-Malo had to endure great suffering during the wars that arose between the French and English kings.

The Earl of Richmond, later Henry VII of England, with whom the Wars of the Roses ended, was conveyed to Saint-Malo. Betrayed by the Duke of Brittany to Richard III's ambassadors, the latter prepared to take him to London for execution. Escaping from his guards, he took refuge in the Cathedral, *Asylum quod in eâ urbe est inviolatissimum* (a place of inviolable refuge in that city): this right of asylum, *Minihi* (Breton for 'sacrosanct') derived from the Druids, the first priests of Aaron's isle.

A Bishop of Saint-Malo was one of the three favorites (the other two were Arthur de Montauban and Jean Hingaut) who ruined the unfortunate Gilles de Bretagne: this one can read in the *Histoire lamentable de Gilles, seigneur de Chateaubriand et de Chantocé, prince du sang de France et de Bretagne, étranglé en prison par les ministres du favori, le 24 avril 1450*.

There was a handsome mutual capitulation between Henri IV and Saint-Malo: the town negotiated with strength from a position of strength, protected those who were refugees within its walls, and achieved the right, by an ordinance of Philibert de la Guiche, Grand-Master of the French artillery, to cast a hundred pieces of cannon. Nowhere resembled Venice (full of light and the arts) more than that little Republic of Saint-Malo: in religion, wealth and maritime chivalry. It supported Charles Quint's expedition to Africa and assisted Louis XIII at La Rochelle. It flew its flag over every sea, maintaining relations with Mocha, Surat, and Pondicherry, and a company born of its womb explored the Southern Sea.

From the reign of Henri IV my native town distinguished itself by its devotion and loyalty to France. The English bombarded it in 1693; they assaulted it with their '*infernal device*' (a massive fire-ship) on the 29th November of that year, and I have often played with my friends among the debris created by that assault. They bombarded it again in 1758.

The inhabitants of Saint-Malo lent a considerable sum to Louis XIV during the war of 1701: in recognition of that service, he confirmed their right to defend themselves; he required the crew of the flagship of the Royal Navy to be made up exclusively of sailors from Saint-Malo and its environs.

In 1771, the inhabitants of Saint-Malo repeated their sacrifice and lent thirty millions to Louis XV. The famous Admiral Anson swooped on Cancalle, in 1758, and burnt Saint-Servan. In the Château of Saint-Malo, La Chalotais wrote on linen, with a toothpick, in water and soot, the memoirs which made so much noise and that no-one remembers. Events wipe out events; inscriptions engraved over previous inscriptions, they are pages in the history of palimpsests.

Saint-Malo furnished the best sailors in our navy; their role in general can be seen in the folio volume, published in 1682, under the title: *Rôle général des officiers, mariniens et matelots de Saint-Malo*. There was a *Coutume de Saint-Malo*, printed as part of the collection of the *Coutumier Général*. The archives of the town are rich in charts useful in mapping maritime history and rights.

Saint-Malo is the native town of Jacques Cartier, France's Christopher Columbus, who discovered Canada. The inhabitants of Saint-Malo have also left their name at the other end of America in the islands that bear their name: the Malouine Islands.

Saint-Malo is the birthplace of Duguay-Trouin, one of the greatest seamen who has ever lived; and in our own time has given France Surcouf. The celebrated Mahé de la Bourdonnais, Governor of Île-de-France, was born at Saint-Malo, as were La Mettrie, Maupertuis, and the Abbé Trublet, whom Voltaire mocked: that's not too bad for an enclosure smaller than the Tuileries' garden.

The Abbé de Lamennais has left far in his wake these little literary notices of my native place. Broussais equally was born at Saint-Malo, like my noble friend, the Comte de La Ferronnays.

Finally, in order to omit nothing, I recall the mastiffs that form the garrison of Saint-Malo: they are descended from those famous dogs, regimental mascots among the Gauls, which, according to Strabo, fought in battles against the Romans alongside their masters. Albertus Magnus, monk of the order of Saint Dominic, an author as weighty as Greek geography, declared that at Saint-Malo 'the protection of so important a place is entrusted each night to the loyalty of certain mastiffs which perform a thorough and secure patrol.' They were condemned to capital punishment for having had the misfortune to savage a gentleman's legs, inconsiderately; an incident that gave rise in our day to the song: *Bon voyage*. They are all treated with callousness. The criminals are poisoned; one of them refuses to take the food from the hands of its weeping owner; the noble animal allows itself to die of hunger: the dogs, like the men, are punished for their faithfulness. Moreover the Capitol was, like my Delos, guarded by dogs, which avoided barking when Scipio Africanus went to his morning prayers.

Encircled by walls of various ages, classed as the great and small, and on which the people stroll, Saint-Malo is still defended by the château of which I spoke, and to which the Duchesse Anne added towers, bastions and moats. Seen from without, the island city resembles a granite citadel.

Children gather on the shore of the open sea, between the château and Fort Royal; it is there that I have been a pupil, companion of the waves and winds. One of the first pleasures I tasted was to contend with the storms, to play with the breakers that retreated before me, or ran after me along the beach. Another game was to make monuments out of sand which my friends called fours (cakes). Since that time, I have often seen castles built for eternity that have collapsed more swiftly than my palaces of sand.

My fate having been decided irrevocably, I was abandoned to an idle childhood. A few notions of drawing, the English language, hydrography and mathematics, seemed more than adequate an education for a little boy destined in advance for the rough life of a sailor.

I grew up at home, without any course of study; we no longer lived in the house where I was born: my mother occupied a large house, in the Place Saint-Vincent, almost opposite the town-gate that lead to the Sillon. The young urchins of the town had become my dearest friends: I filled the stairs and courtyard of the house with them. I resembled them in every respect; I spoke their language; I shared their manners and looks; I was dressed like them, unbuttoned and untidy like them; my shirts were in rags; I had not a single pair of stockings that was not mostly holes; I trailed around in shabby down-at-heel shoes, that slipped off at every step I took; I often lost my cap, and sometimes my jacket. My face was dirty, bruised and scratched, my hands blackened. My appearance was so strange, that my mother, in the midst of her anger, couldn't help laughing and crying out: 'How ugly he is!'

Yet I loved and have always loved tidiness, even elegance. At night I tried to mend my tatters; the maid Villeneuve and my Lucile helped me repair my clothes, in order to spare me scolding and punishment; but their patches only served to render my apparel more bizarre. I was especially saddened when I appeared in rags among the other children, proud of their new clothes and their elegance.

My comrades had a foreign air that smacked of Spain. The Saint-Malo families originated in Cadiz; families from Cadiz took up residence in Saint-Malo. The island site, the streets, the architecture, the houses, the water-tanks, the granite walls of Saint-Malo, gave it a look resembling Cadiz: when I saw the latter town, I was reminded of the former.

Locked up at night in their city by the one key, the inhabitants of Saint-Malo made up a single family. Their manners were so innocent that young women who sent for ribbons and veils from Paris were regarded as worldly creatures whose scandalized companions kept apart from them. A marital weakness was a thing unheard of: a certain Comtesse d'Abbeville, having been touched by suspicion, it resulted in a plaintive ballad that was sung while crossing oneself. However the poet, faithful, despite himself, to the troubadour tradition, sided against the husband whom he called a barbarous monster.

On certain days during the year, the inhabitants of the town and the countryside gathered at fairs called assemblies, held on the islands and in the forts around Saint-Malo: they went to them on foot at low tide, in boats when the tide was high. The host of sailors and peasants; the covered wagons; the caravans of horses, donkeys and mules; the competition between stall-keepers; the tents pitched on the shore; the processions of monks and fraternities winding their way along with their banners and crosses in the midst of the crowd; the boats coming and going driven by oar or sail; the vessels entering harbor, or anchoring in the roads; the artillery salvos, the peals of bells, all combined to bring sound, movement and variety to these gatherings.

I was the only witness to these fairs who did not share in the joy. I appeared there without any money to buy toys or cakes. Evading the scorn that attaches to ill-luck, I sat far from the crowd, by those pools of water that the sea supports and renews in the hollows of the rocks. There, I amused myself watching the puffins and gulls, gazing into the bluish distance, collecting shells, and listening to the waves murmuring on the reefs. I was not much happier at home in the evening; I had a fierce dislike for certain dishes: I was forced to eat them. I used to look imploringly at La France, who removed my plate adroitly when my father turned his head. Regarding warmth, there was the same severity: I was not permitted to approach the fireplace. It is a long way from those strict parents to the child-spoilers of today.

But if I had sorrows that are unknown to childhood these days, I also had pleasures of which it is ignorant.

No one knows any longer what a sense of joy those solemnities of religion and family, or the whole nation and the God of that nation, possessed: Christmas, New Year, Twelfth Night, Easter, Whitsun, Midsummer Day were days of riches to me. Perhaps the influence of my native rock had worked on my feelings and my interests. In the year 1015, the inhabitants of Saint-Malo had vowed to go and help with their hands and their funds in the building of the towers of Chartres Cathedral: have I not also worked with my hands to raise again the fallen spire of the ancient Christian basilica? 'The sun,' said Father Maunoir, 'has never illuminated any region where a more constant and unwavering loyalty to the true faith has been revealed, than Brittany. For thirteen centuries not one infidelity has tarnished the language that has served as a mouthpiece to preach Jesus-Christ, and he is yet to be born who has witnessed a Breton-speaking Breton preach other than the Catholic religion.'

On the feast days that I am about to recall, I was taken on a pilgrimage with my sisters to the various shrines of the town, to the chapel of Saint-Aaron, to the convent of La Victoire; my ears were struck by the sweet voices of unseen women: the harmonies of their canticles mingled with the roar of the waves. When, in winter, at the hour of evening service, the cathedral filled with people; when old sailors on their knees, young women and children with little candles read from their prayer-books; when the congregation at the moment of benediction recited the *Tantum Ergo* in unison, when, in the interval between songs, the Christmas squalls beat at the basilica's stained-glass windows, shaking the vaults of that nave which the lungs of Jacques Cartier and Duguay-Trouin had caused to echo, I experienced a deeply religious feeling. Villeneuve had no need to tell me to fold my hands, to call on God by all the names my mother had taught me; I saw the heavens opening, the angels offering up our incense and our prayers; I bent my head: it was not yet charged with those cares that weigh on us so heavily that one is tempted never to raise one's brow again, once one has bowed it at the foot of the altar.

A sailor leaving these ceremonies, would go on board strengthened against the night, while another was entering port guided by the illuminated dome of the church: so that religion and danger were continually present, and their aspects presented themselves inseparably to my thoughts. I was scarcely born before I heard talk of death: in the evening, a man would go through the streets ringing a bell, calling the Christians to pray for one of their deceased brethren. Nearly every year, boats sank in front of my eyes, and while I was playing along the shore, the sea carried the corpses of foreign sailors, drowned far from their home, to my feet. Madame de Chateaubriand would say to me, as Saint Monica said to her son: *Nihil longe est a Deo*: 'Nothing is far from God'. My education had been entrusted to Providence: it did not spare me its lessons.

Dedicated to the Virgin, I came to know and loved my protectress, whom I confused with my guardian angel: her image, which had cost the good Villeneuve a half-*sou*, was attached with four nails to the head of my bed. I should have lived in the days when people said to Mary: '*Sweet Lady of heaven and earth, mother of mercy, source of every virtue, who bore Jesus Christ in your precious womb, most sweet and beautiful Lady, I thank you and implore you.*'

The first thing I learnt by heart was a sailor's hymn, beginning:

*I place my confidence,  
Virgin, in your aid;  
Grant me your defense,  
With care, protect my days;  
And when that final breath  
Shall complete my fate,  
Grant me holiest death,  
In which to steal away.*

I have since heard that hymn sung in a shipwreck. Even today I still repeat those humble rhymes with as much pleasure as Homer's verse; a Madonna graced with a Gothic crown, clothed in a robe of blue silk, bordered by a silver fringe, inspires greater devotion in me than a Raphael Virgin.

If only that peaceful Star of the Seas had been able to calm my life's disturbances! But I was to be troubled, even in childhood; like the Arab's date tree, my trunk had scarcely sprung from the rock before it was battered by the wind.

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER 4

Gesril – Hervine Magon – The fight with the two ship's boys

La Vallée-aux-Loups, June 1812.

I have said how my precocious rebellion against Lucile's mistresses engendered my evil reputation; a playmate completed it.

My uncle, Monsieur de Chateaubriand du Plessis, who lived at Saint-Malo like his brother, had, like him, four daughters and two sons. Of my two cousins (Pierre and Armand) who formed my first 'society', Pierre became a page to the Queen, while Armand was sent to college as one destined for the religious state. Pierre, ceasing to be a page, entered the Navy and was drowned off the coast of Africa. Armand, immured in his college for years, left France in 1790, served throughout the Emigration, made a score of intrepid journeys to the coast of Brittany in a longboat, and at last came to die for the King on the Plain of Grenelle, on Good Friday 1809, as I have already said, and as I will mention again when I come to tell of his downfall.

Deprived of the society of my two cousins, I replaced it with a new friendship.

On the second floor of the hotel where we lived, a gentleman of the name of Gesril was staying: he had a son and two daughters. The son was brought up differently from me; a spoilt child, whatever he did was considered charming: he loved nothing more than fighting, and above all stirring up quarrels of which he established himself as the arbitrator. Playing naughty tricks on the maids taking children for their walks there was scarcely talk of anything else but his escapades, transformed into the darkest of crimes. His father laughed at it all, and Joson, was only loved the more. Gesril became my close friend and gained an incredible ascendancy over me: I benefited from such a leader, though my character was entirely the opposite of his own. I loved solitary games, and never sought quarrels with anyone: Gesril was wild for the delights of the crowd, and exulted in the midst of brawling children. When some urchin spoke to me, Gesril would say to me: 'You allow that?' At this I imagined my honor was compromised and I would fly in the face of the impudent lad; his height and age were of no consequence. A spectator of the fight, my friend would applaud my courage, but did nothing to help me. Sometimes he raised an army from all the lads he met, divided his conscripts into two gangs, and we skirmished on the shore with stones.

Another game, invented by Gesril, appeared still more dangerous: when the tide was high and stormy, the waves, whipped up at the foot of the château above the main beach, reached the openings in the towers. Twenty feet above the base of one of these towers, a granite parapet held sway, narrow, slippery, sloping, by which one reached the outworks that defended the moat: it was necessary to seize the moment between two breakers to cross the perilous gap, before the wave broke and covered the tower. A mountain of water arrived with an advancing roar which, if you hesitated a moment, could carry you off or crush you against the wall. Not one of us refused the challenge, but I have seen children turn pale before the attempt.

This tendency to push others into adventures, of which he remained a spectator, might lead one to think that Gesril would not reveal a very generous character in later life: nevertheless it was he, who on a much smaller stage, possibly surpassed Regulus in heroism: he only lacked Rome and Titus Livy to ensure his fame. Having become a naval officer he was captured in the Quiberon landing; the action having finished

and the English continuing to bombard the Republican army, Gesril threw himself into the sea, swam to the ships, called to the English to cease fire, and told them of the sad state of the émigrés, and their surrender. They wanted to save him, throwing him a rope, and urging him to climb aboard: '*I am a prisoner on parole,*' he shouted from the midst of the waves, and he swam back to land: he was shot with Sombreuil and his companions.

Gesril was my first friend; both of us misjudged in our childhood, we were allied by an instinct of what we might become one day.

Two adventures brought an end to this first part of my story, and produced a significant change in the manner of my education.

We were on the beach one Sunday, beyond the Porte Saint-Thomas, as the tide rose. At the foot of the chateau and along Le Sillon, large stakes driven into the sand protected the walls against the swell. We used to scramble on top of these stakes to see the first undulations of the flow pass beneath us. The places were occupied as usual; there were several little girls among the boys. I was the farthest lad out to sea, having no one in front of me but a pretty little thing called Hervine Magon, who was laughing with pleasure and crying with fear. Gesril was at the other end near the shore. The wave arrived, the wind blew; already the maids and servants were calling out: '*Come down, Mademoiselle! Come down, Monsieur!*' Gesril waited for a big wave: when it swept in between the piles he gave the child sitting next to him a shove; he fell against another: and he onto the next: the whole line collapsed like a row of cards, but each one was supported by his neighbor; there was only the little girl at the end of the line on whom I leant, and who, unsupported by anyone, fell. The ebb swept her away; a host of shrieks ensued, all the maids hitched up their skirts and waded into the sea, each one seizing her charge, and boxing its ears. Hervine was fished out, but declared that François had pushed her in. The maids descended on me; I escaped; I ran home to barricade myself in the cellar: the female army pursued me. Fortunately my mother and father were away. La Villeneuve defended the door valiantly and struck at the enemy's vanguard. The true originator of the trouble, Gesril, lent his assistance: he climbed to his room, and with his two sisters threw jugs of water and baked apples at the assailants. At nightfall they raised the siege; but the tale went round the town, and the Chevalier de Chateaubriand, aged nine, passed for a desperate character, descended from those pirates whom Saint Aaron had purged from his rock.

This was the other adventure:

I went to Saint-Servan with Gesril, a suburb separated from Saint-Malo by the trading port. To reach it at low tide, you cross the water-course on narrow bridges of flat stones that the rising tide covers. The servants accompanying us had been left far behind us. At the end of one of these bridges we saw two ship's boys coming towards us; Gesril said: '*Are we going to let these beggars pass?*' and immediately shouted at them: '*Into the water, you ducks!*' They, in their role of ship's boys, refused to understand the jest; Gesril retreated; we took up position at the end of the bridge, and snatching up pebbles flung them at the lads' heads. They descended on us, forcing us to give ground, armed themselves with stones, and drove us back on our reserve corps, that is to say our servants. I was not wounded in the eye, like Horatius: a stone struck me so hard that my left ear, almost detached, hung on my shoulder.

I thought no more of my injury, but only of my return home. When my friend returned from his excursion with a black eye, a torn coat, he was comforted, caressed, coddled, and given a change of clothes: in a

similar circumstance, I would be made to do penance. The blow I had received was dangerous, but nothing La France could say would persuade me to go home, I was so afraid I ran and hid on the second floor of Gesril's house, and he bound up my head in a towel. The towel put him in good spirits: it looked to him like a mitre; he transformed me into a bishop, and made me recite the High Mass with him and his sisters until supper time. The pontiff was then obliged to go downstairs: my heart was beating. Surprised by my appearance, bruised and daubed with blood, my father said not a word; my mother let out a shriek; La France explained my pitiful state, and made excuses for me; I received no less of a dressing down. My ear was patched up, and Monsieur and Madame Chateaubriand resolved to separate me from Gesril as quickly as possible. (I have already spoken of Gesril in my works. One of his sisters, Angélique Gesril de la Trochardais, wrote to me in 1818, asking me to obtain permission for Gesril's surname to be joined with that of her husband, and her sister's husband: I failed in my negotiations.)

I am not sure if it wasn't that year that the Comte d'Artois came to Saint-Malo: he was treated to the spectacle of a naval battle. From the heights of the bastion of the powder-magazine, I saw the young prince in the crowd by the sea-shore: in his glory and my obscurity, what unknown workings of destiny! So, unless my memory errs, Saint-Malo has only seen two Kings of France, Charles IX and Charles X.

Such is the picture of my childhood. I do not know if the harsh education I received is good in principle, but it was adopted by my family without design, and as a natural consequence of their temperaments. What is certain is that it made my ideas less like those of other men; what is even more certain is that it marked my sentiments with a melancholy character born in me from the habit of suffering at a tender age, heedlessness and joy.

You might think that this manner of upbringing would lead to my detesting my parents? Not at all; the memory of their strictness is almost dear to me; I prize and honor their great qualities. When my father died, my comrades in the Navarre Regiment witnessed my grief. To my mother I owe the solace of my life, since from her I acquired religion; I listened to the Christian truths that issued from her mouth, as Pierre de Langres would study at night in church, by the light of the lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament. Would my mind have been better developed by launching me into my studies earlier? I doubt it: those waves, those winds, that solitude, that were my first masters were perhaps better suited to my natural disposition; perhaps I owe to these savage instructors virtues I would have lacked. The truth is that no system of education is in itself preferable to any other: do the children of today love their parents more because they address them as tu, and no longer fear them? Gesril was spoilt in the house where I was scolded: we both became honest men, and affectionate and respectful sons. Something you think bad brings out your child's talents; something that seems good stifles those same talents. God does well whatever he does; it is Providence that guides us, when it destines us to play a role on the world's stage.

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER 6

A note from Monsieur Pasquier – Dieppe – A change in my education – Spring in Brittany – Ancient Forest – Pelagian Fields – Moonset over the sea

Dieppe, September 1812.

On the 4th September 1812, I received a note from Monsieur Pasquier the Prefect of Police.

*Office of the Prefect.*

*‘Monsieur the Prefect of Police requests Monsieur de Chateaubriand to have the courtesy to visit his office, either today at four in the afternoon, or tomorrow at nine in the morning.’*

It was an order for me to leave Paris, that Monsieur the Prefect of Police wished to make known to me. I travelled here to Dieppe, which was first called *Bertheville*, and was later, now more than four hundred years ago, named *Dieppe*, from the English word *deep* (being a safe anchorage). In 1787 I was part of the garrison here with the second battalion of my regiment: to inhabit this town, with its houses of brick, and its shops selling ivory carvings, this town of straight well-lit streets, was to find refuge here along with my youth. When I went for a walk I came across the ruins of the chateau d’Arques, reduced to a host of fragments. One must not forget that Dieppe was Duquesne’s birthplace. When I stayed at home, I had the sea to look at; from the table where I sat, I contemplated that sea which had seen my birth, and that washes the shores of Great Britain where I suffered such a lengthy exile: my gaze passed over the waves that bore me to America, cast me ashore once more in Europe, and again carried me to the shores of Africa and Asia. Here’s to you, Oh Sea, my cradle and my image! I wish to tell you the rest of my story: if I tell a lie, your waves, mingled with my days, will testify to my deceit amongst those men who will live after me.

My mother had never ceased wishing that I be given a classical education. The sailor’s life for which I was destined ‘would not be to my taste’, she said; it seemed wise to her, at any event, to equip me for a different career. Her piety led her to hope that I would decide upon the Church. She therefore proposed to send me to a college where I could learn mathematics, drawing, fencing and English; she did not mention Greek and Latin, for fear of alarming my father; but she counted on them being taught to me, in secret at first, then openly when I had made progress in them. My father agreed to the proposition: it was agreed that I would enter the College of Dol. That town was preferred, because it lay on the route from Saint-Malo to Combourg.

During the intensely cold winter that preceded my scholastic internment, fire consumed the hotel where we were living: I was saved by my elder sister who carried me through the flames. Monsieur de Chateaubriand, having retired to his chateau, called his wife to his side: it was required to join him in the spring.

Spring, in Brittany, is milder than in the neighbourhood of Paris, and begins three weeks earlier. The five birds that herald it, the swallow, the oriole, the cuckoo, quail and nightingale, arrive with the breezes that gather in the bays of the Armorican peninsula. The earth is covered with oxeye daisies, pansies, daffodils, narcissi, hyacinths, buttercups, anemones, like the waste ground that surrounds San Giovanni in Laterano



and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, in Rome. The clearings sprinkle themselves with tall, elegant ferns; the stretches of gorse and broom glow with blossom that one takes for golden butterflies. The hedges, their length full of strawberry and raspberry runners, and violets, are decorated with hawthorn, honeysuckle, and brambles with curved brown strands that will bear flowers and magnificent fruit. Everywhere seethes with bees and birds; the swarms and the nests bring children to a halt at every step. In sheltered spots myrtle and oleander interlace over open ground, as in Greece; figs ripen as they do in Provence; and each apple tree, with its carmine flowers, resembles the large bouquet of some village sweetheart.

In the twelfth century, the cantons of Fougères, Rennes, Bécherel, Dinan, Saint-Malo and Dol, were part of the forest of Broceliande; it served as a field of battle for the Franks and the peoples of the Dommonée. Wace says that one could see wild men there, the fountain of Berenton and a gold basin. A historical document from the fifteenth century, *les Usements et coutumes de la forêt de Brécilien*, confirms the Roman de Rou: it is, the *Usements* declares, of vast and spacious extent; 'there are four castles, a very large number of beautiful pools, fine hunting grounds where only beasts of the chase live, never a blow-fly, two hundred plantations of tall trees, and as many fountains including the fountain of Belenton, near to which the Knight Pontus fought.'

Today the countryside retains traces of its origins: interspersed with wooded gullies, from a distance it has the look of a forest and recalls England: it was the haunt of fairies, and you will see that I indeed encountered my sylph there. Narrow valleys are watered by little un-navigable rivers. These vales are separated by moors, and by clumps of tall docked holly trees. On their slopes lie a succession of beacons; lookouts; dolmens; Roman remains; ruins of medieval castles; Renaissance steeples: the sea borders all. Pliny said of Brittany: '*A Peninsula, gazing at the Ocean.*'

Between the sea and the land pelagian fields extend, imprecise boundaries of the two elements: skylarks from the heath fly there with skylarks from the dunes; the plough and the sailing boat are a stone's throw apart, as they furrow the earth and the water. The seafarer and the shepherd borrow each other's terms: the sailor says that the waves flock together, the shepherd speaks of squadrons of sheep. The many-coloured sands, the varied heaps of shells, the kelp, the ribbons of silver foam, outline the edges of the gold or green wheat fields. I no longer remember in what Mediterranean island I saw a bas relief depicting the Nereids attaching fringes to the hem of Ceres' robe.

But what ought to be admired in Brittany is the Moon rising over the land and setting over the sea.

Established by God as the controller of the deep, the Moon has her clouds, her mists, her rays, her accompanying shadows, like the Sun: but like him she does not depart alone; a procession of stars follows her. As she descends from the sky above my native shore she increases its silence which she communicates to the sea; soon she sinks towards the horizon, the intersection, shows no more than half of her waning face, yields, and vanishes in the soft intumescence of the waves. The stars about their queen, before following in her wake, seem to halt, suspended on the crest of the swell. The Moon is no sooner at rest, than a rising breath from afar shatters the images of the constellations, as one extinguishes the torches after a solemn ceremony.

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER 7

#### Departure for Combourg – A description of the Château

I was to accompany my sisters to Combourg: we set off on our journey in the first fortnight of May. We left Saint-Malo at sunrise, my mother, my four sisters and I, in a huge old-fashioned Berlin, with lavishly gilded panels, exterior footboards, and with purple tassels at the four corners of the canopy. Eight horses, decked out like Spanish mules, bells round their necks and smaller ones on their bridles, with housings and woolen fringes in various colors, drew us along. While my mother sighed, and my sisters talked breathlessly, I gazed with both eyes, listened with both ears, and marveled at every turn of the wheels: the first journey of a Wandering Jew who would never find rest. It would be fine if a man only changed place! But his days and his heart change too.

Our horses were rested at a fishing village on the Cancale shore. Afterwards we travelled through the marshes, and the busy town of Dol: passing the door of the college to which I would soon return, we drove deeper into the countryside.

For ten mortal miles we saw nothing but heath land encircled by woods, fallow tracts barely cleared, fields of sparse, stunted black corn, and scanty oats. Charcoal burners led strings of ponies with lank, tangled manes; long-haired peasants in goatskin tunics drove gaunt oxen with shrill cries or walked behind heavy ploughs, like labouring fauns. Finally we discovered a valley at the end of which not far from a pond rose the spire of a village church. At the western extremity of this village the turrets of a feudal château lifted above the tall trees of a wood lit by the setting sun.

I have been obliged to pause: my heart was beating to the point of shaking the table on which I write. The memories that awaken in my mind overwhelm me with their multiplicity and force: and yet what do they signify to the rest of the world?

Descending the hill we forded a stream; after a half-hour drive we left the main road, and the carriage rolled along beside a quincunx, in an avenue of trees whose summits met above our heads: I can still remember the moment when I entered that shade, and the fearful joy I experienced.

Leaving the darkness of the wood, we crossed a forecourt planted with walnut-trees, adjoining the steward's house and garden; from there we emerged through a gateway into a grassy court, known as the *Green Court*. On the right were a run of stables and a clump of chestnut-trees. At the end of the courtyard whose ground rose imperceptibly, the château stood between two stands of trees. Its severe, gloomy façade displayed a curtain wall surmounted by a machicolated covered gallery. The curtain wall linked two towers of differing periods, material, height and thickness, the towers ending in crenellations surmounted by a pointed roof, like a bonnet set on top of a Gothic crown.

Here and there barred windows showed in the bare walls. A wide staircase, straight and steep, of twenty two steps, without banisters or parapet, crossed the filled-in moat, in place of the old drawbridge; it led to the doorway of the château, cut in the center of the façade. Over this doorway one saw the arms of the Lords of Combourg, and the slits through which the beams and chains of the drawbridge once passed.

The carriage stopped at the foot of the staircase; my father came forward to greet us. The family reunion momentarily softened his mood, so much so that he behaved very graciously to us. We climbed the stairs; we penetrated an echoing hallway, with ribbed vaulting, and from this hallway a little inner court.

From this court we entered the main building which looked south over the pond, and linked two little towers. The whole chateau had the shape of a four-wheeled carriage. We found ourselves on a level with a room once known as the *Guardroom*. A window opened out at each of its extremities; two others pierced its lateral lines. To increase the size of these four windows it had been necessary to cut through eight to ten foot thick walls. Two corridors with a sloping incline like that of the [Great Pyramid](#) led from the two outer corners of the room to the little towers. A spiral staircase winding up one of these towers established a connection between the Guardroom and the upper storey: such was the structure of this building.

That of the façade with its tall and thick towers, facing north, over the *Green Court*, consisted of a kind of square, somber dormitory, used as a kitchen; to this was added the entrance-hall, the staircase and a chapel. Over these rooms, was the room of the *Archives*, or *Arms*, or *Birds*, or *Knights*: so named from its ceiling decorated with coloured escutcheons and paintings of birds. The recesses of the narrow trefoiled windows were so deep they formed little rooms round each of which ran a bench of granite. Add to this, in various parts of the edifice, secret stairs and passageways, dungeons and keeps, a labyrinth of open and covered galleries, walled-up cellars whose ramifications were unknown; everywhere silence; darkness and a visage of stone: behold the [château of Combourg](#).

A supper served in the Guardroom, which I ate cheerfully, brought an end for me to the first joyous day of my life. True happiness costs little; if it is expensive, it is not of a superior kind.

I was scarcely awake the next morning before I was off to explore the grounds of the château, and celebrate my entrance into solitude. The staircase faced north-west. Sitting at the head of this staircase you had the *Green Court* before you, and beyond that courtyard a kitchen garden between two groves of tall trees: the one on the right (the quincunx through which we had driven) was called the *Little Mall*; the other, on the left, the *Great Mall*: this was a wood of oak, beech, sycamore, elm and chestnut. [Madame de Sévigné](#) in her time spoke highly of these ancient shade-givers; since that age, a hundred and forty years have been added to their beauty.

On the opposite side, to the south and east, the countryside presented a very different picture: from the windows of the great hall, you could see the houses of Combourg, a pond, the causeway beside the pond along which the highroad to Rennes passed, a water-mill, and a meadow filled with herds of cows, separated from the pond by the causeway. Alongside this meadow stretched a hamlet attached to a priory founded by [Rivallon](#), Lord of Combourg, in 1149, where one could see his mortuary statue, lying on its back in knightly armor. From the pond, the land rose gradually, forming an amphitheater of trees, from which projected village spires and the turrets of manor-houses. On the far horizon, between south and west, the heights of [Bécherel](#) were silhouetted. A terrace bordered by large ornamental box-trees encircled the foot of the château on that side, passed behind the stables and ran with various twists and turns to rejoin the garden that communicated with the Grand Mall.

If following this over-lengthy description a painter were to take up his brush would he produce a sketch resembling the château? I don't know; and yet my memory sees the object as if it were before my eyes;

such is the impotence of words and the power of memory over material things! By starting to speak of Combours I am reciting the first couplets of a plaintive ballad which has charm only for myself; ask the goat-herd of the Tyrol why he loves the two or three notes he repeats to his flock, sounds of the mountain, throwing off echo after echo in order to resound from one side of a torrent to the other?

My first stay at Combours was of short duration. Scarcely a fortnight had passed before I witnessed the arrival of Abbé Portier, the principal of Dol College; I was delivered into his hands, and followed him despite my tears.

## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 1

The School at Dol – Mathematics and Languages –The nature of my memory.

Dieppe, September 1812. (Revised June 1846)

I was not a complete stranger to Dol; my father was canon there, as the descendant and representative of the house of Guillaume de Chateaubriand Sire de Beaufort [d. 1530], founder in 1529 of one of the first stalls in the cathedral choir. The Bishop of Dol was Monsieur de Hercé, a friend of my family, a prelate of very moderate political views, who kneeling, with crucifix in hand, was shot with his brother the Abbé de Hercé, at Quiberon, on the Field of Martyrdom. Arriving at the school, I was entrusted to the special care of Monsieur l'Abbé Leprince, who taught rhetoric and had a profound knowledge of geometry: he was a witty and handsome man, a lover of the arts, who could paint excellent portraits. He undertook to teach me my Bezout; the Abbé Égault, master of the fourth years, became my Latin master; I studied mathematics in my own room, Latin in the schoolroom.

It took some time for an owl of my species to accustom itself to the cage represented by a school, and regulate its flight by the sound of a bell. I could not win the ready friends that wealth provides, since there was nothing to be gained from a poor wretch without even a weekly allowance; nor did I join any kind of clique, since I hate protectors. At games, I did not try to lead others, but I would not be led: I was not suited to be a tyrant or a slave, and so I have remained.

Nevertheless as it happened I quite quickly became the center of a set; I exerted the same influence, later, in my regiment: simple ensign that I was, senior officers spent their evenings with me and preferred my rooms to the mess. I don't know why this was, unless perhaps it stemmed from my ability to enter into the spirit and adopt the manners of others. I enjoyed hunting and running as much as reading and writing. It is still a matter of indifference to me whether I talk about the most ordinary matters or speak on the most elevated of subjects. Being insensitive to wit, it is almost antipathetic to me, though I am no boor. No failings shock me, except ridicule and conceit, which I find it hard not to attack; I find that others always have some superiority over me, and if by chance I sense an advantage, I am dreadfully embarrassed by it.

Qualities that my early education had left dormant awoke in me at school. My aptitude for work was remarkable, my memory extraordinary. I made rapid progress in mathematics to which I brought a clearness of thought that astonished the Abbé Leprince. At the same time I showed a decided bent for languages. The rudiments, the torment of schoolboys, cost me nothing to acquire; I waited for the Latin lessons with a kind of impatience, as a relaxation after my calculations and geometry diagrams. In less than a year I reached good second form standard. For some strange reason, my Latin phrases fell so naturally into pentameters that the Abbé Égault called me the Elegist, a name which stuck to me among my schoolmates.

As to my memory, two traits were visible. I learnt logarithm tables by heart: that is to say when a number was given in a geometric series I discovered from memory its exponent in the corresponding arithmetic series, and vice versa.

After evening prayers which were offered communally in the college chapel, the Principal gave his lecture. One pupil, chosen at random, was obliged to reply. We arrived at prayers tired from our games

and dying to sleep; we threw ourselves onto the benches, trying to squeeze ourselves into a dark corner, in order not to be seen and consequently questioned. Above all there was a confessional that we fought over as a perfect retreat. One evening, I had the good luck to gain this refuge and considered myself safe from the Principal; unfortunately, he spotted my maneuver and decided to make an example of me. He elaborated on the second point of a sermon, slowly and lengthily; everyone slept. I don't know what chance led me to stay awake in my confessional. The Principal, who could only see the soles of my feet, thought I was taking my ease like the rest, and suddenly apostrophizing me, asked me what he had been saying.

The second point of the sermon contained an enumeration of the various ways in which one might offend God. I not only repeated the essence of the thing, but I recounted the divisions in order, and repeated several pages of mystical prose, unintelligible to a child, almost word for word. A murmur of applause filled the chapel: the Principal called me, gave me a little pat on the cheek, and allowed me, as a reward, to stay in bed the following day till lunchtime. I evaded, modestly, the admiration of my schoolmates and profited fully from the grace accorded me. This memory for words, which has not wholly stayed with me, has given way to another kind of memory, more remarkable, of which I may perhaps have the opportunity to speak.

One thing humbles me: memory is often a facet of stupidity; it generally reveals itself in dull souls, making them heavier from the load with which it burdens them. Nevertheless, without memory, what would we be? We would forget our friendships, our loves, our pleasures, our business affairs; the genius could never collect his thoughts; the most affectionate heart would lose its tenderness, if it could not remember; our existence would reduce to the successive moments of a present which flowed by without cease; there would be no more past. O wretchedness that is ours! Our life is so trivial that it is no more than a reflection of our memory.

## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 2

Holidays at Combours – Life in a provincial château – Feudal customs – The inhabitants of Combours

Dieppe, October 1812.

I went to Combours for the duration of the holidays. Life in a château near Paris can give no idea of life in a château in a provincial backwater.

The estate of Combours had for its whole domain only some heath land, a few mills, and two forests, Bourgouët and Tanoërn, in a part of the country where timber is almost valueless; but it was rich in feudal rights; these rights were of various kinds: some determined certain rents for certain concessions, or enshrined practices born of the old political order; others seemed to have had their origin only in amusements.

My father had revived some of these latter rights, in order to prevent their prescription. When all the family were gathered together, we took part in these medieval pleasures: the three principal ones were the Saut des poissonniers, the Quintaine, and the fair called the Angevine. Peasants in clogs and laced breeches, men of a France that is no more, watched those games of a France that was already no more. There was a prize for the victor, a forfeit for the vanquished.

The Quintaine preserved the tradition of the tournament: it surely had some connection with the ancient military duties of the fiefs. It is well described in Du Cange (*Voce, Quintana*). Forfeits had to be paid in old copper coinage to the value of two *moutons d'or à la couronne* of 25 Parisian sols each.

The fair known as the Angevine was held in the Pond Meadow, on the 4th of September each year, my birthday. The vassals were obliged to take up arms, and came to the château to raise the banner of their lord; from there they went to the fair to keep order, and to enforce the collection of a toll due to the Counts of Combours on every head of cattle, a sort of royalty. During that time my father kept open house. There was dancing for three days: by the masters in the grand hall to the scraping of a violin; for the vassals in the Green Court to the nasal whine of a bagpipe. They sang, cheered, and fired arquebusades. These noises mingled with the lowing of cattle at the fair; the crowds wandered through the gardens and the woods, and at least once a year Combours saw something resembling joy.

So I enjoyed the singular distinction in life of having assisted at the races of the Quintaine and at the proclamation of the *Rights of Man*; of having viewed the bourgeois militia of a Breton village and the National Guard of France, the banner of the Lords of Combours, and the flag of the Revolution. It is as if I were the last witness to feudal custom.

The visitors who were received at the château comprised the leading inhabitants of the village, and the local nobility: these good people were my first friends. Our vanity sets too much importance on the role we play in the world. The Parisian bourgeoisie laugh at the bourgeoisie from a small town; the Court nobility mock the provincial nobility: the famous man scorns one who is unknown, without reflecting that time serves equal justice on their pretensions, and that they are all equally ridiculous or tedious in the eyes of succeeding generations.

The most important local inhabitant was a Monsieur Potelet, a retired sea-captain of the India Company who recalled tall tales of Pondicherry. As he told them with his elbows on the table my father always wished to throw his plate in his face. After him came the tobacco bonder, Monsieur Launay de La Billardière, the father, like Jacob, of a family of twelve children, in his case nine girls and three boys, of whom the youngest, David, was a playmate of mine. This good man took it into his head to become a nobleman in 1789: he had left it rather late! In his household there was a good deal of happiness and plenty of debt. The seneschal Gébert, the fiscal attorney Petit, the tax-collector Le Corvaisier, and the chaplain the Abbé Charmel, completed Combours society. I have met no-one more distinguished since in Athens.

Messieurs du Petit-Bois, de Chateau-d'Assie, de Tinténia, and one or two other gentlemen, would come, on Sunday, to hear mass in the parish, and to dine afterwards with the lord of the manor. We were especially close to the Trémaudan family, comprising the husband, his very pretty wife, her sister and several children. The family lived in a tenant farm which only declared its nobility by means of a dovecote. The Trémaudans live there still. Wiser and more fortunate than I, they have never lost sight of the towers of that château which I left thirty years ago; they still live as they lived when I went to eat brown bread at their table; they have never left that refuge which I have never re-entered. Perhaps they are speaking of me at the same instant that I am writing this page: I reproach myself for dragging their name from its sheltering obscurity. They doubted for a long time as to whether the man whom they heard of was indeed their petit chevalier. The rector or curé of Combours, the Abbé Sévin, the same whose extolling of virtue I have listened to, has shown the same incredulity; he could not be persuaded that the little rascal, the friend of peasants, was the defender of religion; he ended by believing, and quotes me in his sermons, having once held me on his knee. These worthy men, who blend not one unfamiliar concept into their portrait of me, who see me as I was in my childhood and youth, would they know me today under the disguises of time? I would be obliged to tell them my name before they would wish to clasp me in their arms.

I bring misfortune to my friends. A game-keeper, called Raulx, who was attached to me, was killed by a poacher. This murder made an extraordinary impression on me. What a strange mystery there is in human sacrifice! Why must it be that the greatest crime and the greatest glory lie in shedding human blood? My imagination showed me Raulx, holding his entrails in his hands, dragging himself to the cottage where he died. I conceived the notion of vengeance; I would have liked to attack the assassin. In this respect I was oddly endowed at birth: in the first moment of injury, I scarcely feel it; but it imprints itself on my memory; the remembrance instead of waning, waxes with time; it remains in my heart for months, entire years, then it wakes on the least occasion with fresh force, and my wound becomes more vivid than on the first day. But if I never forgive my enemies, I do them no harm; I bear a grudge but am not vindictive. Having the power to revenge myself, I lose the desire; I could only be dangerous in misfortune. Those who thought me ready to yield to their oppression were wrong; adversity is for me what the earth was to Antaeus: I gather strength at my mother's breast. If ever good fortune has taken me in its arms, it has suffocated me.



## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 3

Holidays again at Combours – The Conti Regiment – Camp at Saint-Malo – An Abbey – The Theatre –  
My two eldest sisters' marriages – Return to school – A revolution begins in my ideas.

Dieppe, October 1812.

I returned to Dol, much to my regret. The following year there was a campaign to make a landing on Jersey, and a camp was established near Saint-Malo. Troops were billeted at Combours; Monsieur de Chateaubriand, out of courtesy, successively provided lodging for the colonels of the Touraine and Conti Regiments; one was the Duc de Saint-Simon, and the other the Marquis de Causans. (I have experienced a real pleasure in again meeting this gallant gentleman, distinguished for his loyalty and Christian virtues, since the Restoration. Note: Geneva, 1831). A score of officers were invited to my father's table every day. The pleasantries of these officers displeased me; their walks disturbed the peace of my woodlands. It was through seeing the lieutenant-colonel of the Conti Regiment, the Marquis de Wignacourt galloping beneath the trees, that the idea of travel entered my head for the first time.

When I heard our guests talking of Paris and the Court, I was saddened; I tried to guess what Society was like: I imagined something vague and far-off; but soon became confused. Gazing at the world from the tranquil regions of innocence, I felt giddy, as one does when looking at the earth from the height of one of those towers lost in the heavens.

One thing however charmed me, the parade. Each day, the new guard, led by the drummer and band, would file past the foot of the staircase in the Green Court. Monsieur de Causans proposed showing me the camp on the coast: my father consented.

I was accompanied to Saint-Malo by Monsieur de La Morandais, a gentleman of good family, whom poverty had reduced to being the steward of the Combours estate. He wore a coat of grey camlet, with a little silver band at the collar, and a cap or headpiece of grey felt with earflaps, with a peak in front. He put me behind him on the crupper of his mare Isabelle. I held on to the belt that carried his hunting knife, attached to the outside of his coat: I was delighted. When Claude de Bullion, and President de Lamoignon's father, travelled to the country, as children: '*They were both carried by the same donkey, in the panniers, one on one side, and one on the other, and they packed a loaf of bread next to Lamoignon, since he was lighter than his friend, to act as a counterweight.*' (*Memoirs* of President de Lamoignon)

Monsieur de La Morandais took shortcuts:

*Gladly, in a noble manner,  
On he rode by wood and river:  
For no one rode more cheerfully  
Than François beneath the tree.*

We stopped for dinner at a Benedictine Abbey, which, for lack of a sufficient number of monks had been incorporated in a leading community of the order. We only found the bursar there, who had been charged with disposing of the furnishings, and selling the timber. He served us an excellent meal without meat, in

what had been the Prior's library: we ate a quantity of new-laid eggs with some carp and huge pike. Through the arches of a cloister I could see tall sycamores, bordering a pond. An axe struck at the foot of each tree, its crown trembled in the air, and it fell, providing us with a show. Carpenters from Saint-Malo were sawing off green branches as one trims hair on a young head, or squaring off the fallen trunks. My heart bled at the sight of those decimated woods and that deserted monastery. The general sack of religious houses has reminded me since of the despoliation of the abbey, which was for me a portent.

Arriving at Saint-Malo, I met the Marquis de Causans; under his escort I traversed the avenues of the camp. The tents, the stacks of weapons, the tethered horses, made an attractive scene together with the sea and its vessels, and the high walls and distant steeples of the town. I saw pass by, on a barb at full gallop, one of those men with whom a world draws to an end, the Duc de Lauzun. The Prince de Carignan, having joined the camp married Monsieur de Boisgarin's daughter, charming though a little lame: it caused a great row and led to a legal case that Monsieur Lacretelle the Elder is even now defending. But what relationship do these events have to my life? *'In proportion as the memory of my intimate friends gives them a complete view of their subject,'* says Montaigne, *'so they push their narrative into the past, so that if the story is a good one they smother its virtues, if it is not you curse their fortunate powers of memory or their unfortunate lack of judgement.....I have known some very amusing tales become most tiresome in the mouth of a certain gentleman.'* I am afraid of being that gentleman.

My brother was at Saint-Malo, when Monsieur de La Morandais deposited me there. One evening he said: *'I'm taking you to the theatre: get your hat.'* I lost my head and went straight to the cellar to find my hat which was in the attic. A troupe of strolling players had just arrived. I had seen marionettes; I imagined that at the theatre one saw puppets much superior to those in the street.

I arrive with beating heart at a wooden building on a deserted road. I entered through dark corridors, not without a certain feeling of apprehension. A little door was opened, and there I was with my brother in a box half-full of people.

The curtain had risen, the play began: they were performing Diderot's Le Père de famille. I saw two men walking about the stage and talking, while everybody looked at them. I took them for the managers of the puppet-show, chatting outside the Old Woman's hut, waiting for the audience to arrive: I was surprised only by the fact that they talked so loudly of their affairs, and were listened to in silence. My astonishment grew when other people arriving on stage started waving their arms about and weeping, and everyone started weeping in sympathy. The curtain fell without my understanding anything of this. My brother went downstairs to the foyer between the two plays. Left in the box among strangers, a situation which my shyness rendered a torment, I would have preferred to be in the haven of my school. Such was the first impression I gained of the art of Sophocles and Molière.

The third year of my life at Dol was marked by the marriage of my two eldest sisters: Marianne to the Comte de Marigny, Bénigne to the Comte de Québriac. They accompanied their husbands to Fougères, a signal for the dispersal of a family whose members were destined soon to separate. My sisters received the nuptial blessing at Combourg on the same day, at the same time, at the same altar, in the chapel of the château. They wept, my mother wept; I was astonished by this sadness: I understand it today. I never attend a baptism or a wedding without smiling bitterly or experiencing a contraction of my heart. After the misfortune of being born, I know none greater than that of giving birth to a human being.

That same year saw a revolution in my person as in my family. Chance caused two very different books to fall into my hands, an unexpurgated Horace and a history of *Painful Confessions*. The mental upheaval that these two books produced in me is unbelievable: a new world came into being around me. On the one hand, I suspected secrets incomprehensible to one of my age, an existence different from my own, pleasures beyond my games, charms of an unknown nature in a sex of which I had seen only a mother and sisters; on the other, spectres dragging chains along and vomiting flames announced eternal punishment for a single concealed sin. I lost sleep; at night I thought I could see black hands and white hands passing in turn across my curtains: I came to imagine that the latter hands were cursed by religion, and this idea added to my horror of the infernal shades. I searched in vain in heaven and hell for an explanation of a double mystery. Assaulted suddenly both morally and physically, I continued to struggle in my innocence against the storms of premature passion and the terrors of superstition.

From then on I felt several sparks fly from that fire which is the transmission of life. I analysed the fourth book of the *Aeneid* and read *Télémaque*: all at once I discovered in *Dido* and in *Eucharis* beauties that ravished me; I became aware of the music of those marvelous verses and of classical prose. One day I translated impromptu the *Aeneadum genitrix, hominum divumque voluptas: Mother of Aeneas, delight of men and gods* of *Lucretius* with so much liveliness that *Monsieur Égault* tore up the poem, and set me to work on Greek roots. I stole a *Tibullus*: when I reached *Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem: What joy to hear the raging winds as I lie there*, those feelings of sensual delight and melancholy showed me my true nature. The volumes by *Massillon* containing the sermons of the *Adulteress* and the *Prodigal Son* never left my side. I was not allowed to leaf through books since there were few doubts as to what I might discover. I would steal little bits of candle from the chapel to read, at night, those seductive descriptions of the disorders of the soul. I would fall asleep stammering incoherent phrases, in which I would try to capture the sweetness, meter, and grace of the writer who had best conveyed the *Racinian* euphony in prose.

If, since that time, I have depicted with some degree of truth the movements of the heart mingled with Christian remorse, I am persuaded that I have owed that success to chance, which at the same moment led me to comprehend two inimical empires. The ravages that a doubtful book inflicted on my imagination were compensated for by the terrors that another book inspired in me, and these were softened to some extent in turn by the tender thoughts which certain unveiled pictures had left with me.

## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 4

The adventure of the magpie – Three holidays at Combourg – The charlatan – Return to school

Dieppe, End of October 1812.

What one says of our misfortunes, that they never arrive singly, one can say of the passions: they appear together, like the Muses or the Furies. Accompanying the propensity which began to torment me, the sense of honor arose in me; spiritual exaltation, that renders the heart incorruptible in the midst of corruption; a kind of principle of reclamation set against one of destruction, like the inexhaustible fount of wonders that love asks of youth, and of the sacrifices which it demands.

When the weather was fine, the school boarders were allowed out on Thursdays and Sundays. We often headed for Mont-Dol, on the summit of which stood some Gallo-Roman ruins: from the heights of this isolated hill the eye glided over the sea, and over the marshes where will-o'-the-wisps flickered at night, witches' lights that burn today in our lamps. Another objective of our walks was the meadows surrounding a Seminary of Eudists, the name deriving from Eudes, the brother of the historian Mézeray, the founder of their congregation.

One day in May, the Abbé Égault, prefect for the week, led us to the seminary: we were allowed great freedom in our games, but were expressly forbidden to climb trees. The master, having set us on a grassy path, moved off to recite his breviary.

Elms bordered the path; right at the top of the tallest a magpie's nest glowed: we were lost in admiration, the mother-bird sitting on her eggs visible to all of us, and we were seized by a strong desire to gain that magnificent prize. But who would dare attempt the adventure? The rule was so strict, the master so near, the tree so tall! All hope rested on me; I climbed like a cat. I hesitated: then glory inspired me: I shed my coat, I grasped the elm, and began to climb. The trunk was free of branches for two thirds of its height: there it forked, one of the limbs bearing the nest.

My friends, gathered under the tree, hailed my efforts, watching me, watching the place from which the prefect might appear, quivering with joy in hope of the eggs, dying with fear in expectation of punishment. I reached the nest; the magpie flew off; I snatched the eggs, put them inside my shirt and descended. Unfortunately I allowed myself to slip between the twin trunks, and hung astride the fork. The tree had been trimmed, I was unable to gain support for my feet on the right or left in order to raise myself and regain the outer edge: I was left hanging fifty feet in the air.

Suddenly there was a shout: '*The prefect is coming!*' and I found myself abandoned immediately by my friends, as is customary. Only one, named Le Gobbien, tried to help me, but was soon obliged to renounce his generous attempt. There was only one way to escape my unfortunate situation; that was to hang by my hands from one of the two limbs of the fork, and try to grip the tree-trunk below the fork with my feet. I executed the maneuver at the risk of my life. In the midst of my tribulations, I had not let go of my treasure; though I would have been better off letting go of it, as I have since let go of many another. Sliding down the trunk I scorched my hands, scraped my legs and chest, and crushed the eggs: it was that which gave me away. The master had not seen me up the tree; I hid the scratches from him easily enough,

but there was no way of concealing the bright yellow color with which I was stained. ‘*Come, Monsieur,*’ he said, ‘*you shall be whipped.*’

If that gentleman had announced to me that he would commute the punishment to one of death, I would have experienced a feeling of joy. The idea of shame had not yet been part of my wild education: at every period of my life there has been no torture I would not have preferred to the horror of having to blush before a living creature. Indignation rose in my heart; I replied to the Abbé Égault, in a tone that was not that of a child, but that of a man, that neither he nor anyone else would ever lay a hand on me. This reply roused him; he called me a rebel, and promised to make an example of me. ‘We will see,’ I answered, and started playing ball with a sang-froid that astonished him.

We returned to school; the master made me go to his room, and ordered me to submit. My exalted sentiments gave way to a flood of tears. I reminded the Abbé Égault that he had taught me Latin; that I was his pupil, his disciple, his child; that he would not wish to dishonour his pupil, and make the sight of my friends insupportable to me; that he could put me in prison, on bread and water, deprive me of my amusements, set me tasks, penums; that I would be grateful to him for his clemency and would love him the more for it. I fell at his feet; I clasped my hands; I begged him to spare me for Jesus Christ’s sake: he remained deaf to my pleas. I rose up, full of anger, and lashed out at his legs so wildly that he let out a cry. He ran to close the door of his room, double-locked it and returned to me. I took refuge behind his bed; he laid into it with blows from his iron ruler. I twisted about in my hiding place and rousing myself to combat, I cried out:

*‘Macte animo, generose puer! Bless your courage, noble child!’*

This comical erudition made my enemy laugh despite himself: he spoke of armistice: we concluded a treaty; I agreed to submit to the principal’s judgement. Without deciding in my favor, the principal still wished me to escape the punishment I had resisted. When the excellent priest pronounced my acquittal, I kissed the hem of his robe with such a show of feeling and gratitude, that he could not resist giving me his blessing. So ended the first struggle that made me render homage to what became the idol of my life, and to which on so many occasions I have sacrificed peace, pleasure and fortune.

The holidays during which I entered on my twelfth year were sad ones; the Abbé Leprince accompanied me to Combours. I never went out except with my tutor; we went for long aimless walks together. He was dying of consumption; he was melancholy and silent; I was scarcely any happier. We walked for hours, one behind the other, without speaking a word. One day we lost our way in the woods; Monsieur Leprince turned to me and said: ‘Which path shall we take?’ I replied without hesitating: ‘the sun is setting; at this moment it is striking the window of the great tower: let us go that way.’ Monsieur Leprince told my father of it that evening: the future traveler revealed himself in my decision. Many a time, seeing the sun set in the forests of America, I recalled the woods of Combours: my memories echo one another.

The Abbé Leprince wished for me to be given a horse; but in my father’s opinion a naval officer only needed to know how to handle a boat. I was reduced to riding two fat coach-horses or a big piebald, in secret. The latter was not, like Turenne’s Pie, one of those war-horses that the Romans called desultorios equos: circus horses, trained to help their masters; it was a temperamental Pegasus whose hooves knocked together when it trotted, and who bit my legs when I set it at a ditch. I have never cared much for horses,

though I have led the life of a Tartar: and contrary to the effect that my early training should have produced, I ride with more elegance than soundness.

The tertian fever, the germs of which I had brought from the marshes of Dol, relieved me of Monsieur Leprince. A seller of remedies passed through the village; my father, who had no faith in doctors, believed in charlatans: he sent for the quack who swore he would cure me in twenty-four hours. He returned the following day in a green coat trimmed with gold braid, a large powdered wig, huge ruffles of dirty muslin, false gems on his fingers, worn black satin breeches, bluish-white silk stockings, and shoes with enormous buckles.

He opened my bed-curtains, felt my pulse, made me put out my tongue, spoke a few words of broken Italian regarding the necessity of purging me, and gave me a little piece of caramel to eat. My father approved of all this, since he maintained that all illness arose from indigestion, and for every kind of malady it was essential to purge a patient till he bled.

Half an hour after swallowing the caramel, I was seized with terrible vomiting; Monsieur de Chateaubriand was told, and wished to hurl the poor devil from the window of the tower. The latter, terrified, took off his coat, and rolled up his sleeves, making the most grotesque gestures imaginable. With every movement, his wig swung about in all directions; he echoed my cries adding after each: '*Che? Monsou Lavandier?*' This Monsieur Lavandier was the village pharmacist, who had been called in to assist. I could scarcely tell, in the midst of my pain, whether I would die from the man's medicines or from the bursts of laughter he drew from me.

The effects of this overdose of emetic were countered, and I was set on my feet again. All our life is spent wandering around our grave; our various maladies are so many puffs of wind that carry us nearer to or further from harbor. The first dead person I saw was a canon of Saint-Malo; he lay lifeless on a bed, his face distorted by his last convulsions. Death is beautiful, she is our friend, yet we do not recognize her, because she appears masked to us, and because her mask terrifies us.

I was sent back to school at the end of the autumn.

## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 5

#### Invasion of France – Games – The Abbé de Chateaubriand

Vallée-aux-Loups, December 1813.

From Dieppe where the police injunction had obliged me to take refuge, I was allowed to return to the Vallée-aux-Loups, where I continue my story. The earth trembles under the feet of foreign soldiers, who at this very moment are invading my country; I write like one of the last Romans, amidst the sounds of the Barbarian invasion. By day I trace pages as troubled as the events of the day (*De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*. Note: Geneva, 1831); at night, while the rumble of distant cannon expires among my woods, I return to the silence of years that sleep in the tomb, to the tranquility of my earliest memories. How narrow and brief a man's past is, beside the vast present of nations and their immense future!

Mathematics, Greek and Latin occupied the whole of my winter at school. What was not dedicated to study was given up to those childhood games played in every place. The little English boy, the little German, the little Italian, the little Spaniard, the little Iroquois, the little Bedouin all bowl the hoop and throw the ball. Brothers in one great family, children lose their common features only when they lose their innocence, which is the same everywhere. Then the passions, modified by climate, government and customs, differentiate the nations; the human race ceases to speak and hear the same language: society is the true tower of Babel.

One morning I was engrossed in a game of prisoner's base in the great courtyard of the school; someone came to tell me I was wanted. I followed the servant to the main gate. There I found a stout, red-faced man with a brusque and impatient manner, and a fierce voice, with a stick in his hand, wearing an untidy black wig, a torn cassock with the ends tucked into the pockets, dusty shoes, and stockings with holes in the heels: 'Little scamp,' he said, 'aren't you the Chevalier de Chateaubriand de Combours?' 'Yes, Monsieur,' I replied, amazed by his form of address. 'And I,' he continued, almost foaming at the mouth, 'I am the last of the elder branch of your family, I am the *Abbé de Chateaubriand de la Guerrande*; take a good look at me.' The proud Abbé put his hand into the fob pocket of an old pair of plush breeches, took out a moldy six-franc crown piece wrapped in dirty paper, flung it in my face, and continued his journey on foot muttering his matins with a furious air. I have since learnt that the Prince de Condé had offered this country rector the post of tutor to the Duc de Bourbon. The vain priest replied that the Prince, as owner of the Barony of Chateaubriand, ought to know that the heirs to that barony could have tutors, but not be tutors themselves. This pride was my family's main fault; in my father it was odious; my brother took it to ridiculous lengths; it has passed in some degree to his eldest son. I am not sure, despite my republican leanings, that I am completely free from it myself, though I have carefully concealed it.

## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 6

#### First Communion – I leave Dol College

The time for making my first communion approached, the moment when in my family the child's future state was determined. This religious ceremony took the place among young Christians of the assumption of the *toga virilis* among the Romans. Madame de Chateaubriand had come in order to be present at the first communion of a son who, after being united to God, would be separated from his mother.

My piety appeared sincere; I edified the whole school: my looks were ardent; my fasts were frequent enough to give my masters concern. They feared excessive devotion; enlightened religion sought to moderate my fervor.

For confessor I had the superior of the Eudist seminary, a man of fifty with a stern appearance. Every time I presented myself at the confessional, he questioned me anxiously. Surprised at the triviality of my sins, he did not know how to reconcile my distress with the lack of importance of the secrets I confided to him. The nearer Easter came, the more pressing the priest's questions became. '*Are you hiding anything from me?*' he asked. I replied: '*No, father.*' '*Have you committed such and such a sin?*' '*No, father.*' It was always: '*No, father.*' He dismissed me doubtfully, sighing, and gazing into the depths of my soul, while I left his presence pale and unnatural like a criminal.

I was to receive absolution on the Wednesday in Holy Week. I spent the night between Tuesday and Wednesday in prayer, or reading with terror the book of Painful Confessions. On the Wednesday, at three in the afternoon, we left for the seminary; our parents accompanying us. All the idle fame that has since attached itself to my name would not have given Madame de Chateaubriand one iota of the pride which she experienced, as a Christian and a mother, in seeing her son ready to participate in the great mystery of religion.

Arriving at the church, I prostrated myself before the altar and lay there as if annihilated. When I rose to go to the sacristy, where the superior awaited me, my knees trembled beneath me. I threw myself at the priest's feet, and it was only in the most strangled of tones that I managed to pronounce my *Confiteor*. '*Well, have you forgotten nothing?*' the man of God asked me. I remained silent. His questions continued, and always the fatal, no, my father, issued from my lips. He meditated, he asked for counsel of Him who conferred on the apostles the power of binding and loosing souls. Then, making an effort, he prepared to give me absolution.

If Heaven had shot a thunderbolt at me it would have caused me less dread. I cried out: '*I have not confessed all!*' This redoubtable judge, this delegate of the Supreme Arbiter, whose face so inspired me with fear, became the most tender of shepherds; he embraced me, and melted with tears: '*Come now,*' he said to me, '*my dear boy, courage!*'

I will never know such another moment in my life. If the weight of a mountain had been lifted from me, I could not have been more relieved: I sobbed with happiness. I venture to say that it was on that day that I became an honest man; I felt that I could never survive remorse: how great it must be for a crime, if I



could suffer so much from hiding childish weaknesses! But how divine that religion is that can seize on our best instincts in this way! What moral precepts could ever replace these Christian institutions?

The first step having been made, the rest cost little: the childish things I had concealed, and which would have made the world smile, were weighed in the balance of religion. The superior was greatly embarrassed; he would have wished to delay my communion, but I was about to leave Dol College and would soon be entering the Navy. With great sagacity he discovered in the very character of my youthful sins, insignificant as they were, the nature of my propensities: he was the first person to penetrate the secret of what I might become. He divined my future passions; he did not hide from me the good he thought he saw in me, but he also predicted the evils to come. ‘*After all,*’ he added, ‘*you have little time for penitence; but you have been cleansed of your sins by a courageous, though tardy, avowal.*’ Raising his hand, he pronounced the formula of absolution. On this second occasion, that fearful hand showered only heavenly dew on my head; I lowered my brow to receive it; what I felt partook of the angels’ joy. I ran to fling myself on my mother’s breast where she waited for me at the foot of the altar. I no longer seemed the same person to my masters and schoolfellows; I walked with a light step, head held high, with a radiant air, in all the triumph of repentance.

The next day, Maundy Thursday, I was admitted to that sublime and moving ceremony whose image I have vainly attempted to describe in Le Génie du Christianisme. I might have felt my usual little humiliations there too: my nosegay and my clothes were not as fine as those of my companions; but that day all was of God and for God. I know exactly what Faith is: the Real Presence of the Victim in the Blessed Sacrament on the altar was as manifest as the presence of my mother at my side. When the Host was laid on my tongue, I felt as though all were alight within me. I trembled with veneration, and the only material thing that occupied my thoughts was the fear of profaning the sacred bread.

*The bread I offer you  
Serves the angels for food,  
For God has made it too  
From his crops good and true.*

*-Racine.*

I again understood the courage of the martyrs; at that moment I would have been able to witness to Christ on the rack, or surrounded by lions.

I like to recall those felicities, which in my soul only just preceded the world’s tribulations. In comparing that ardor to the transports I am going to portray; in viewing the same heart experiencing during the interval of three or four years all that innocence and religion possess of what is sweetest and most salutary, and all that the passions possess of what is most seductive and disastrous, you may choose between two joys; you may see in what direction we should search for happiness, and above all peace.

Three weeks after my first communion, I left Dol College. A pleasant memory of that place remains with me: our childhood leaves something of itself in the places it has embellished, as a flower transfers its perfume to the objects it touches. I still feel moved to this day when thinking of the dispersal of my first schoolfellows and my first masters. The Abbé Leprince, appointed to a living near Rouen, did not survive long; the Abbé Égault obtained a curacy in the diocese of Rennes, and I saw the principal, the good Abbé

Portier, die at the start of the Revolution: he was learned, gentle and simple of heart. The memory of that obscure Rollin will always be dear and venerable to me.

## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 7

Mission at Combours – Rennes College – I meet Gesril again – Moreau – Limoëlan –  
My third sister's marriage

Vallée-aux-Loups, End of December 1813.

At Combours I found food for my piety, a mission; I followed its exercises. I received the sacrament of Confirmation on the steps of the manor, with the peasant boys and girls, from the Bishop of Saint-Malo's hand. Afterwards, a cross was erected; I helped to support it while it was being fixed on its base. It still exists: it stands in front of the tower in which my father died. For thirty years it has seen no-one appear at the windows of that tower; it is no longer saluted by the children of the château; each spring it waits for them in vain; it only sees the swallows return, the companions of my childhood, more loyal to their nest than man to his home. How happy I would have been if my life had been spent at the foot of the mission cross, if my hair had only been whitened by the years that have covered the arms of that cross with lichen!

I did not wait long before leaving for Rennes. I was to continue my studies and complete my mathematics course in preparation for my examination as a Naval Guard at Brest.

Monsieur de Fayolle was the principal of Rennes College. In this Breton 'Juilly' there were three distinguished teachers, the Abbé de Chateaugiron for the humanities, the Abbé Germé for rhetoric, and the Abbé Marchand for physics. Both boarders and day-pupils were numerous, the classes hard. Later, Geoffroy and Ginguené, who graduated from this college, would have brought honor to Sainte-Barbe or Plessis. The Chevalier de Parny also studied at Rennes; I inherited his bed in the room I was assigned.

Rennes seemed like a Babylon to me, the school a world. The multitude of masters and boys, the extent of the buildings, gardens and playground struck me as immense; I grew used to it however. On the Principal's name day we were given a few days off; we sang magnificent couplets of our own, at the tops of our voices, in his praise, or we recited:

*O Terpsichore, O Polyhymnia,  
Come, come inspire our voices;  
Reason itself invites you here.*

I acquired over my new schoolmates the same ascendancy I had exercised over my old companions at Dol: it cost me a few blows. Breton scamps are quarrelsome; on half-holidays we exchanged invitations to fight in the shrubberies of the Benedictines' garden, called the Thabor: we used mathematical compasses fixed to the end of a cane, or we fought hand to hand more or less treacherously or courteously according to the gravity of the challenge. There were umpires who decided whether a forfeit was due, and in what ways the champions could use their hands. The combat did not end until one of the two contestants acknowledged himself vanquished. I found my old friend Gesril here, presiding, as at Saint-Malo, over these engagements. He wanted to be my second in an affair that I had with Saint-Riveul, a young nobleman who became the first victim of the Revolution. I fell beneath my adversary, refused to surrender, and paid dearly for my pride. Like Jean Desmarets on his way to the scaffold, I said: '*I cry mercy to God alone.*'

At the College I met two men who have since become famous in different ways: Moreau, the general, and Limoëlan, creator of the infernal machine, who is now a priest in America. There is only one portrait of Lucile in existence and this poor miniature was created by Limoëlan, who turned portrait painter during the revolutionary troubles. Moreau was a day-boy, Limoëlan a boarder. Such singular destinies have rarely been found together at the same moment, in the same province, in the same small town, in the same educational establishment. I can't help recounting a school prank that my friend Limoëlan played on the prefect for the week.

The prefect used to make his round of the corridors after lights out to see if all was well: to achieve this he would look through a hole cut in each of the doors. Limoëlan, Gesril, Saint-Riveul and I slept in the same room:

*'Of evil creatures it made a very good dish.'*

We had stopped the holes with paper on several occasions, in vain; the prefect poked the paper out and caught us jumping on our beds and breaking chairs.

One evening, Limoëlan, without telling us his plan, persuaded us to go to bed and douse the light. Soon we heard him get up, go to the door, and then return to bed. A quarter of an hour passed, and here came the prefect on tiptoe. Since we were suspects of his, for sound reasons, he stopped at our door, listened, looked, saw no light at all, thought the hole blocked and imprudently stuck his finger in...imagine his anger! 'Who's done this?' he shouted rushing into the room. Limoëlan was choking with laughter, and Gesril asked in a nasal voice, in his half innocent half mocking way: *'What is it, Monsieur le Prefect?'* Thereupon, Saint-Riveul and I, laughing like Limoëlan, hid our heads under the bedclothes.

They could get nothing out of us: we were heroic. We were all four imprisoned in the vaults: Saint-Riveul dug out the earth beneath a door that led to the farmyard; he stuck his head into this mole-hill, and a pig ran up and made as if to eat his brains; Gesril slid into the College cellars and set a barrel of wine flowing; Limoëlan demolished a wall, while I, a new Perrin Dandin, climbing to a ventilator, stirred the mob in the street with my harangues. The fearful creator of the infernal machine, playing this school prank on a college prefect, recalls the young Cromwell, inking the face of another regicide who signed Charles I's death warrant after him.

Though the regime at Rennes College was very religious, my fervor abated: the multitude of masters and school friends multiplied the occasions for distraction. I made progress in my language studies; I became strong in mathematics, for which I have always had a decided leaning: I would have made a good naval officer or engineer. All in all, I was born with a ready disposition: alert to serious as well as pleasant things, I began with poetry, before arriving at prose: the arts enraptured me; I have loved music and architecture passionately. Though quick to become bored by everything, I have been capable of plenty of fine detail; having been endowed with patience for every trial, though weary of the aim that possesses me, my persistence is greater than my distaste. I have never abandoned any matter that has been worth the effort of completion; there are things in my life I have pursued for fifteen or twenty years, as full of ardor on the last day as on the first.

This mental flexibility appeared in secondary matters. I was good at chess, skillful at billiards, hunting and fencing; I drew passably well; I would have sung well, if my voice had been trained. All this,

combined with the way I was educated, and the life of a soldier and traveler, ensured I have never considered myself a pedant, have never displayed a dull or conceited manner, the awkwardness, the slovenly habits of previous men of letters, still less the arrogance and self-assurance, the envy and blustering vanity of the new authors.

I spent two years at Rennes College; Gesril left eighteen months before me. He entered the Navy. Julie, my third sister, was married in the course of those two years: she wedded the Comte de Farcy, a captain in the Condé Regiment, and settled at Fougères with her husband, where my two elder sisters, Mesdames de Marigny and de Québriac were already living. Julie's marriage took place at Combours, and I assisted at the wedding. There I met that Comtesse de Trojolif who was noted for her courage on the scaffold: a cousin and close friend of the Marquis de La Rouërie, she was involved in his conspiracy. I had not seen beauty until then, except in my own family; I was confused at finding it in the face of this stranger. Every step in my life opened a new perspective; I heard the distant seductive voice of the passions approaching me; I hurried towards those *Sirens*, drawn by an unfamiliar music. It so happened that like the High Priest at Eleusis I had different incense for each deity. But could the hymns I sang, while burning this incense, be called *Perfumes*, like the poems of the hierophant?

## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 8

I am sent to Brest to take the Navy examination – The Port of Brest – I meet  
Gesril again – La Pérouse – I return to Combours

Vallée-aux-Loups, January 1814.

After Julie's wedding I set out for Brest. I did not feel the same regret on quitting the great College of Rennes that I experienced on leaving the little College of Dol; perhaps I no longer possessed that innocence that makes everything seem attractive to us: my youth was no longer in bud, time was beginning to unfurl it. In my new position I had as mentor one of my maternal uncles, the Comte Ravenel de Boisteilleul, commander of a squadron, one of whose sons, a highly distinguished artillery officer in Bonaparte's armies, married the only daughter of my sister the Comtesse de Farcy.

Arriving at Brest, I failed to find my cadet's commission waiting; some accident had delayed it. I remained what was known as an *aspirant*, and as such was exempt from the usual studies. My uncle put me to board in the Rue de Siam, at a cadets' hostel, and introduced me to the Naval Commander, Comte d'Hector.

Left to my own devices for the first time, instead of making friends with my future messmates, I retreated into my customary solitude. My habitual society was confined to my masters in fencing, drawing and mathematics.

At Brest, that sea which I was to meet with on so many coasts washed the tip of the Armorican peninsula: beyond this prominent cape, there lay only a boundless ocean and unknown worlds; my imagination delighted in those deeps. Often, sitting on some mast laid along the Quai de Recouvrance, I watched the movements of the crowd: shipwrights, sailors, soldiers, customs-men, and convicts passed to and fro in front of me. Voyagers embarked and disembarked, pilots controlled some maneuver, carpenters planed blocks of wood, rope-makers spun their cables, ship's-boys lit fires under coppers which gave off clouds of smoke and the healthy smell of tar. Bales of merchandise; sacks of victuals; trains of artillery were carried up, carried down, rolled along from sea to magazine and magazine to sea. Here carts backed into the water to receive their cargo; there hoists lifted loads, while cranes lowered stones, and dredging machines dug out silt. Forts repeated signals, launches came and went, and vessels cast off or anchored in the docks.

My spirit was full of vague ideas regarding society, its virtues and faults. Some malaise overcame me; I left the mast on which I had been sitting; I climbed back up along the River Penfeld that flowed into the harbor; I reached a bend where the harbor vanished. There, with nothing to see but a peaty valley, but still hearing the confused murmur of the sea and the voices of men, I lay down on the brink of the little river. Now watching the water flow, now following with my eyes the flight of a cough, enjoying the silence around me, or listening to the blows of the caulking hammers, I fell into the profoundest reverie. In the midst of it, if the wind brought me the sound of a canon fired by some vessel setting sail, I would shiver and tears would fill my eyes.

One day, I had set out to walk to the far end of the harbor, towards the sea: it was warm; I lay down on the beach and fell asleep. Suddenly I was woken by a tremendous noise: I opened my eyes, as Augustus did seeing the triremes in the anchorage of Sicily, after the victory over Sextus Pompey; the reports of guns followed; the roads were crowded with ships: the great French squadron was returning after the signing of peace. The ships maneuvered under sail, hoisted their lights, showed their colors, presented their sterns, bows or broadsides to the shore, stopped short by dropping anchor in mid-course, or continued to skim the waves. Nothing has ever given me a more exalted idea of the human spirit; man seemed at that moment to have borrowed something from Him who said to the sea: 'You shall go no further...' *Non procedes amplius...*

All Brest hurried to the harbor. Launches detached themselves from the fleet and came alongside the mole. The officers with which they were crowded, faces bronzed by the sun, had that foreign look one brings back from another hemisphere and an ineffable air of gaiety, pride and daring, as befitted men who had come from restoring the honor of the national ensign. This naval corps, so worthy and illustrious, companions of Suffren, La Motte-Picquet, Couëdic and D'Estaing, having escaped from enemy fire, were destined to fall to that of Frenchmen!

I was watching the brave troops file by, when one of the officers left his comrades and fell upon my neck: it was Gesril. He seemed taller, but was weak and ailing from a sword-thrust he had taken in the chest. He left Brest the same evening to rejoin his family. I saw him only once more, shortly before his heroic death; I will explain the circumstances later. Gesril's appearance and sudden departure led me to take a decision which changed the course of my life: it was written that this young man should exert an absolute influence on my destiny.

Once can see how my character was shaping, what turn my ideas were taking, what the first symptoms of my genius were, since I can speak of it as an illness, whatever it may have been, rare or common, worthy or unworthy of the name I give it, for lack of another word that might express it better. I would have been happier if I had been more like other men: anyone who, without destroying my spirit, could have managed to kill what is called my talent would have done me a friendly service.

When the Comte de Boisteilleul took me to meet Monsieur Hector, I heard sailors, young and old, recounting their campaigns, and speaking of the countries they had visited: one had arrived from India, another from America; this one had to set sail for a round the world trip, that one was off to rejoin his Mediterranean station, to visit the shores of Greece. My uncle pointed out La Pérouse to me in the crowd, a new Cook, whose fate is a secret kept by the storms. I heard it all, and saw it all, without uttering a word; but there was no sleep for me that night: I spent it deep in imaginary battles, or discovering vast worlds.

Be that as it may, on seeing Gesril about to return to his parents, I decided that there was nothing to stop me going home to mine. I would have truly liked serving in the Navy, if my spirit of independence had not made me unfit for service of any kind: I have within me an inability to obey. Travel tempted me, but I felt I could only enjoy it alone, following my own whim. At last, showing the first evidence of my inconstancy, without telling my uncle Ravenel, without writing to my parents, without asking anyone's permission, without waiting for my cadet's commission, I left one morning for Combourg, where I arrived as if I had dropped from the sky.

I am still astonished today that given the terror my father inspired in me, I should have dared to take such a step, and what is just as astonishing is the manner in which I was received. I ought to have expected transports of violent anger, I was welcomed tenderly. My father contented himself with shaking his head as if to say: 'Here's a fine to-do!' My mother kissed me, with a full heart, grumbling at the same time, my Lucile in an ecstasy of joy.



## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 9

#### A Walk – The Ghost of Combourg

Montboissier, July 1817.

Between the last date on these Memoirs, of January 1814 at the Vallé-aux-Loups, and today at Montboissier, in July 1817, three years and six months have passed. Did you hear the Empire fall? No: nothing has disturbed the peace of this place. Yet the Empire is destroyed; the vast ruin has collapsed while I am alive, like Roman remains tumbling into the bed of an unknown stream. But to one who considers them of no account, events are of little importance: a few years escaping from the hands of the Eternal will render justice to all these alarms with a silence without end.

The previous chapter was written under the dying tyranny of Bonaparte and by the gleam of the last lightning flashes of his glory: I begin the present chapter in the reign of Louis XVIII. I have seen kings close to, and my political illusions have vanished, like those gentler chimeras whose story I continue. Let us speak first of what led me to take up the pen: the human heart is everything's toy, and one cannot foresee what trivial circumstance may cause its joys and its pains. Montaigne remarked on it: 'No cause is required to agitate our soul', he said, 'a daydream without substance or meaning will rule and agitate it'

I am now at Montboissier, on the borders of La Beauce and Le Perche. The château on this estate belonging to Madame the Comtesse de Colbert-Montboissier, was sold and demolished during the Revolution: there are only two lodges left, separated by a fence and once forming the caretaker's dwelling. The park, now in the English style, bears traces of its old French regularity: straight alleys, and copses trained into bowers, give it a formal air; it is as pleasing as a ruin.

Yesterday evening I took a solitary walk; the sky resembled an autumn sky; a cold wind often blew. At an opening in a thicket, I stopped to watch the sun: it sank into the clouds above the tower of Alluye, where Gabrielle, who lived in that tower, watched as I did the sun set two hundred years ago. What has become of Henri and Gabrielle? What I will have become, when these *Memoirs* are published.

I was drawn from my reflections by the song of a thrush perched on the topmost branch of a silver birch. In a moment, its magic brought the family home before my eyes; I forgot the catastrophes I had witnessed, and suddenly transported into the past I revisited those fields where I had so often heard the song of the thrush. When I listened to it then, I was as sad as I am now; but that first sadness was one which is born from a vague desire for happiness, while one still lacks experience; the sadness that I feel now arises from knowledge of things assessed and judged. The song of the bird in the woods of Combourg sustained that bliss in me that I thought to attain; the same song in the park of Montboissier recalled days lost in pursuit of that unachievable bliss. There is nothing more for me to learn; I have travelled faster than others, and made the tour of life. The hours fly past and carry me with them; I have not even the assurance of completing these Memoirs. In how many places have I already continued writing them, and in what place will I finish them? How many times shall I walk the wood's edge? Let me profit from the few moments that remain to me; let me hasten to portray my youth, while I can still make contact with it: the traveler, leaving an enchanted shore forever, writes his journal in sight of a country that is departing, and will soon be lost.



## BOOK II

### CHAPTER 10

College at Dinan – Broussais – I return to my parents' house

I have spoken of my return to Combours, and how I was received there by my father, mother and sister Lucile.

Perhaps it has not been forgotten that my other three sisters were married, and that they lived on their new families' estates near Fougères. My brother, whose ambition was beginning to develop, was more often in Paris than at Rennes. He first bought a post as *maître des requêtes* which he sold in order to take up a military career. He entered the Royal Cavalry Regiment; he then joined the diplomatic corps and accompanied the Count de la Luzerne to London, where he met André Chenier: he was on the point of obtaining the Vienna Embassy when our troubles broke out; he applied for that of Constantinople; but he faced a formidable rival, Mirabeau, to whom the embassy had been promised as a reward for joining the Court party. My brother had therefore only just left Combours at the moment when I came to live there.

Entrenched in his manor, my father no longer left it, not even during the sittings of the States of Brittany. My mother went to Saint-Malo every year for six weeks, around Easter; she waited for that moment as one of release, since she detested Combours. A month before the trip, it was discussed as though it was a hazardous enterprise; preparations were made; the horses were rested. On the eve of departure, they went to bed at seven in the evening, in order to rise at two. My mother, to her great satisfaction, set off at three in the morning, and spent the whole day covering thirty miles.

Lucile, who had been received as a canoness in the Chapter of L'Argentière, was to transfer to that of Remiremont: awaiting the move, she remained buried in the country.

As for myself, after my escape from Brest, I declared that my firm wish was to embrace the ecclesiastical state: the truth is that I was only trying to gain time, since I did not know what I wanted. I was sent to Dinan College to complete my humanities course. My Latin was better than that of my teachers; but I started to learn Hebrew. The Abbé de Rouillac was the Principal of the College, and the Abbé Duhamel was my tutor.

Dinan, adorned with ancient trees, fortified with old turrets, was built on a picturesque site, beneath a high hill at the foot of which the Rance flows, a tidal river; it overlooks pleasantly wooded sloping valleys. The mineral waters of Dinan have some renown. This town, full of history, the birthplace of Duclos, possesses among other antiquities Du Guesclin's heart: heroic dust which, stolen during the Revolution, was on the verge of being ground down by a glazier for use in decorating stained glass; was it destined for various tableaux of victories achieved over our country's enemies?

Monsieur Broussais, my compatriot, studied with me at Dinan; the students were taken off to bathe every Thursday, like the clerks under Pope Adrian I, or every Sunday, like the prisoners under the Emperor Honorius. Once I thought I would be drowned; on another occasion Monsieur Broussais was bitten by thankless leeches, lacking knowledge of the future. Dinan was equidistant from Combours and Plancoët. I would go in turn to see my uncle De Bedée at Monchoix, and my family at Combours. Monsieur de Chateaubriand, who sought economy in my upkeep, and my mother who wished me to persist in the

religious vocation, but had scruples about urging me, no longer insisted on my residence at college, and I found myself, imperceptibly, a fixture in the paternal home.

I would still take pleasure in recalling my parent's ways, were they merely a fond memory to me; but I will paint the portrait all the more readily in that it seems as if traced precisely from the vignettes in medieval manuscripts: between the present time and the time I am going to depict centuries have elapsed.

## BOOK III

### CHAPTER 1

#### Life at Combours – Days and Evenings

Montboissier, July 1817. (Revised December 1846)

After my return from Brest, four masters (my father, mother, sister and I) inhabited the château of Combours. A cook, a chambermaid, two footmen and a coachman comprised the whole domestic staff: a hunting dog and two old mares were hidden away in a corner of the stable. These twelve living beings were swallowed up by a manor house where one might not have noticed a hundred knights, their ladies, squires and varlets, with King Dagobert's chargers and hounds.

In the course of a year never a stranger presented themselves at the château, except for a few noblemen, such as the Marquis de Montlouet, or the Comte de Goyon-Beaufort, who sought hospitality on their way to plead at the High Court. They arrived in winter, on horseback, pistols at their saddle-bows, hunting-knives at their sides, followed by a man-servant also on horseback, with a big livery trunk behind him.

My father, always very formal, would receive them, bare-headed, on the steps, in the midst of wind and rain. These country gentlemen, once inside, would talk about their Hanoverian campaigns, family affairs and the progress of their law-suits. At night they were shown to the north tower, to Queen Christina's chamber, a guest room occupied by a seven foot square bed, with two sets of curtains in green muslin and crimson silk, and supported by four gilt Cupids. Next morning, when I descended to the great hall, and looked out of the windows at the countryside, inundated, or blanketed with frost, all I would see were two or three travelers on the lonely road beside the pond: they would be our guests riding towards Rennes.

These strangers knew little of the affairs of life; nevertheless our view was extended, because of them, for a few miles beyond the horizon of our woods. When they had left we were reduced on weekdays to family conversation, and on Sundays to the society of the village notables and the local gentry.

On Sundays, if the weather was fine, my mother, Lucile, and I went to the parish church through the Little Mall, and along a country lane; when it rained we used the abominable Rue de Combours. We were not carried, like the Abbé de Marolles, in a light chariot drawn by four white horses, captured from the Turks in Hungary. My father only attended church once a year to perform his Easter duties; for the rest of the year he heard Mass in the chapel of the château. Sitting in the lord of the manor's pew, we received the incense and prayers in front of the black marble tomb of Renée de Rohan, next to the altar: a symbol of mortal honors; a few grains of incense in front of a sepulchre!

These Sunday entertainments expired with the day: they were not even guaranteed. During the worst of the seasons, whole months passed by without a single human creature knocking on our castle door. If the gloom was great on the heaths round Combours, it was greater still in the château: one experienced, penetrating its vaults, the same sensation as on entering the Charterhouse at Grenoble. When I visited it in 1805, I traversed a wasteland which was perpetually in growth; I thought it would terminate at the monastery; but they then showed me, within the sacred walls, the gardens of the Charterhouse which were even more overgrown than the woods. Finally, at the center of the monument, enveloped in the shrouds of

all those solitudes, I found the ancient cemetery of the coenobites; a sanctuary where eternal silence, the divinity of the place, extended its power over the mountains and forests around.

The bleak tranquility of the Château of Combourg was increased by my father's taciturn and unsociable nature. Instead of gathering his family and servants around him, he had scattered them to every corner of the building. His bedroom was situated in the small east tower, and his study in the small west tower. The furniture in this study consisted of three chairs in black leather, and a table covered with title-deeds and parchments. A genealogical tree of the Chateaubriand family hung over the chimney-piece, and in one window-corner one could see all sorts of fire-arms from pistol to blunderbuss. My mother's room was above the great hall, between the two small towers: it had a parquet floor and was decorated with faceted Venetian mirrors. My sister occupied a closet adjoining my mother's room. The chambermaid slept a long way off, in the main building between the two large towers. As for myself, I was tucked away in a sort of isolated cell, at the top of the staircase turret which connected the inner courtyard with the various parts of the château. At the foot of this staircase, my father's valet and manservant slept in vaulted cellars, while the cook was garrisoned in the great west tower.

My father rose at four in the morning, winter and summer alike: he went into the inner courtyard to call for, and wake, his valet, at the entrance to the turret staircase. A small coffee was brought to him at five: he then worked in his study until midday. My mother and sister each breakfasted in their rooms, at eight. I had no fixed time, for rising or breakfasting; I was supposed to study till noon: most of the time I did nothing.

At half past eleven, the bell rang for dinner which was served at midday. The great hall acted as both dining and drawing room: we dined and supped at one end of the east side; after the meal we went and sat at the other end of the west side, in front of an enormous fireplace. The great hall was wainscoted, painted in pale grey and decorated with old portraits from the reigns of François I to Louis XIV; among the portraits one could make out those of Condé and Turenne: a painting, representing Hector, slain by Achilles beneath the walls of Troy, hung over the chimney-piece.

Dinner over, we stayed together till two. Then, if it was summer, my father entertained himself fishing, inspected his kitchen-gardens, or took a walk 'to the extent of a capon's flight'; if it was autumn or winter he went hunting, and my mother retired to the chapel where she spent several hours in prayer. This chapel was a sombre oratory, embellished with fine paintings by the greatest masters, which one hardly expected to find in a feudal castle, in the depths of Brittany. I have in my possession today a Holy Family by Albani, painted on copper, taken from this chapel: it is all that remains to me of Combourg.

Once my father had set out, and my mother was at her prayers, Lucile shut herself in her room; I returned to my cell, or went off to roam the fields.

At eight, the bell rang for supper. After supper, on fine days, we sat out on the steps. My father, armed with a shotgun, fired at the owls that flew from the battlements as night fell. My mother, Lucile, and I, gazed at the sky, the woods, the dying rays of the sun, the first stars. At ten we went in to sleep.

Autumn and winter evenings had a different character. Supper over, and the four diners having moved from table to fire-place, my mother sank, sighing, onto an old day-bed covered with Siam; a little table with a candle was placed before her. I sat near the fire with Lucile; the servants cleared the table and

withdrew. My father then set off on a walk which lasted till he retired to bed. He was dressed in a thick white woolen robe, or rather a sort of cloak, that I have never seen on anyone else. His head, which was half-bald, was covered with a big white bonnet which stood upright. When, while walking, he strayed far from the fire-place, the vast hall was so badly lit by a single candle that he could not be seen; he could only be heard walking among the shadows; then he returned slowly towards the light and emerged little by little from the darkness, like a spectre, with his white robe, white bonnet, and long pale face. Lucile and I would exchange a few words in a low voice, while he was at the other end of the hall; we fell silent as he approached us. He would say in passing: 'What are you talking about?' Seized by terror we could not reply; he would continue his walk. For the rest of the evening, nothing met the ear but the measured sound of his steps, my mother's sighs, and the murmur of the wind.

Ten o'clock sounded on the château clock: my father would stop; the same spring which had raised the hammer of the clock seemed to have suspended his steps. He pulled out his watch, wound it, took a large silver candlestick holding a tall candle, went into the small west tower for a moment, then returned, candle in hand, and headed for his bedroom, adjoining the small east tower. Lucile and I stood in his way; we kissed him and wished him goodnight. He offered us his dry, hollow cheek without replying, walked on, and withdrew into the depths of the tower, the doors of which we heard closing behind him.

The spell was broken; my mother, my sister and I, transformed to statues by my father's presence, recovered the functions of life. The first effect of our disenchantment revealed itself in a torrent of words: if silence had oppressed us, we made it pay dearly.

The flow having ceased, I would call the chambermaid, and escort my mother and sister to their rooms. Before I left, they made me look under the beds, up the chimneys and behind the doors and inspect the stairs, passages and neighboring corridors. All the traditions of the château, of robbers and ghosts, returned to their thoughts. The servants were convinced that a particular Comte de Combours, with a wooden leg, three centuries dead, appeared at certain times, and that he had been met with on the great staircase of the turret; and sometimes his wooden leg walked, by itself, accompanied by a black cat.

## BOOK III

### CHAPTER 2

#### My keep

Montboissier, August 1817.

These stories occupied all the time my mother and sister spent preparing for bed: they climbed into bed dying of fright; I retired to the heights of my turret; the cook returned to the great tower, and the servants descended to their vaults.

The window of my keep opened on the inner court; by day, I had a view of the battlements opposite, where hart's-tongue ferns flourished and a wild plum-tree grew. The martins which, during the summer, dived with shrill cries into holes in the walls were my sole companions. By night I could only see a little patch of sky and a few stars. When the moon was shining, sinking in the west, I knew it by the rays that shone through the diamond-shaped window panes onto my bed. Screech-owls, gliding from one tower to the other, passed to and fro between the moon and I, casting the moving shadow of their wings on my curtains. Banished to the loneliest corner, at the entrance to the galleries, I did not lose a murmur among the shadows. Sometimes the wind seem to scamper lightly; sometimes it let groans escape; suddenly my door would be shaken violently, the cellars gave out bellowing sounds, then the noises would die away only to commence again. At four in the morning, the voice of the master of the château, calling his valet at the entrance to the ancient vaults, echoed like the voice of night's last phantom. That voice for me took the place of the sweet harmony of sounds with which Montaigne's father woke his son.

The Comte de Chateaubriand's insistence on making a child sleep alone at the top of a tower may have had its inconveniences; but it worked to my advantage. This harsh manner of treating me gave me a manly courage without destroying that liveliness of imagination of which nowadays they try to deprive youth. Instead of trying to convince me that ghosts did not exist, I was forced to confront them. When my father, with an ironic smile, said: 'Is Monsieur the Chevalier afraid?' he could have made me sleep with the dead. When my excellent mother said: 'My child, nothing happens without God's permission: you have nothing to fear from evil spirits, as long as you are a good Christian', I was more reassured than by all the arguments of philosophy. My success was so complete that the night winds in my lonely tower, served merely as playthings for my fancies, and wings for my dreams. My imagination was kindled, and spreading to embrace everything, failed to find adequate nourishment anywhere and would have devoured heaven and earth. It is that moral state which I must now describe. Immersed again in my youth, I am going to try and capture my past self, to show myself as I was, such as perhaps I regret no longer being, despite the torments I endured.



## BOOK III

### CHAPTER 3

#### The passage from childhood to adulthood

I had barely returned from Brest to Combourg than a revolution took place in my existence; the child vanished and the man appeared with all his passing joys and lasting sorrows.

To begin with everything became a passion with me, pending the arrival of the passions themselves. When, after a silent dinner at which I had not dared to speak or eat, I succeeded in escaping, my delight was incredible; I could not descend the staircase with the same breath: I would have flown headlong. I was obliged to sit on a step to allow my excitement to subside; but as soon as I had reached the Green Court and the woods, I began running, jumping, leaping, skipping, gamboling about until I fell down, my strength exhausted, panting, drunk with frolics and freedom.

My father took me with him hunting. A taste for the sport gripped me and I pursued it with fury; I can still see the field where I killed my first hare. In autumn I would often stand up to my waist in water for four or five hours, waiting for wild duck at the edge of a pond; even today, I cannot stay calm when a dog halts and points. However, in my first ardor for the chase, there was a measure of independence; crossing ditches, tramping through fields, marshes, and moors, finding myself with a gun in a deserted spot, possessing strength and solitude, was my way of being close to nature. In my travels, I would stray so far that I could walk no further, and the gamekeepers were obliged to carry me on a litter of branches.

Yet the pleasures of the chase no longer satisfied me; I was stirred by a yearning for happiness, which I could neither control nor understand; my heart and mind ended by forming in me two empty temples, without altars or sacrifices; it was not yet known which god would be worshipped there. I grew up with my sister Lucile; our friendship filled our whole life.

## BOOK III

### CHAPTER 4

#### Lucile

Lucile was tall and of a remarkable, but grave beauty. Her pale face was framed by long black tresses; she often fixed her gaze on the sky or cast around her looks full of sadness or fire. Her walk, her voice, her smile, her features held something of the dreamer and the sufferer.

Lucile and I were useless to one another. When we spoke of the world, it was of that we bore within ourselves, and which scarcely resembled the real world. She saw me as her protector, I saw her as my friend. She had fits of gloomy thought that I had difficulty in dispelling; at seventeen she mourned the passing of her youth; she wished to bury herself in a convent. To her everything was care; sorrow; suffering: an expression she sought, or a chimera she created, tormented her for months on end. I have often seen her, one arm thrown above her head, dreaming, motionless and inanimate; drawn towards her heart, her life ceased to appear on the surface; even her breast no longer rose and fell. In her attitude, her melancholy, her classical beauty, she resembled a funereal Genius. I would try at those times to console her, and the next moment I would plunge into inexplicable despair.

Lucile loved to enjoy some pious text, at evening, in solitude: her favorite oratory was the junction of two country roads, marked by a stone cross, and a poplar whose tall column rose into the sky like an artist's brush. My devout mother, enchanted, said that her daughter reminded her of a Christian girl of the primitive Church, praying at one of those stations called *laures*.

From the concentration of soul in my sister there were born extraordinary spiritual effects: in sleep, she had prophetic dreams; awake, she seemed to read the future. On one of the landings of the staircase in the great tower, there was a clock which struck the hours in the silence; Lucile unable to sleep, would go and sit on a step, facing the clock: she would watch its face by the light of her lamp placed on the ground. When the two hands met at midnight giving birth, at their formidable conjunction, to the hour of crime and disorder, Lucile heard sounds which revealed distant death. Finding herself in Paris a few days before the 10th of August, staying with my other sisters in the neighbourhood of the Carmelite Convent, she cast her eyes on a mirror, gave a cry and said: 'I have just seen Death enter.' On the moors of Scotland, Lucile would have been one of [Walter Scott](#)'s mystic women, gifted with second sight; on the moors of Brittany, she was only a solitary creature blessed with beauty, genius and misfortune.

### BOOK III

#### CHAPTER 5

##### First breath of the Muse

The life which my sister and I led at Combourg heightened the exaltation natural to our age and character. Our principal distraction consisted of walking side by side in the Great Mall, in spring on a carpet of primroses, in autumn on a bed of dry leaves, in winter on a sheet of snow embroidered with the tracks of birds, squirrels, and stoats. Young as the primroses, sad as the withered leaves, pure as the fresh snow, there was harmony between us and our pastime.

It was during one of these walks that Lucille, listening to me speaking rapturously about solitude, said to me: ‘You ought to write all that down.’ This remark revealed the Muse to me; a divine breath passed over me. I began stammering out verse, as if had been my native language; day and night I sang of my pleasures, that is to say my woods and valleys; I composed a host of little idylls or portraits of nature. (See my *Complete Works*. Note: Paris, 1837) I wrote in verse long before writing in prose: Monsieur de Fontanes claimed that I had been equipped with both abilities.

Did this talent promised to me by friendship ever show itself in me? How many things I have waited for in vain! In the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, a slave, posted as sentry on the heights of the palace of Argos; strains his eyes to make out the agreed signal for the return of the fleet; he sings to relieve the tedium of his vigil, but the hours pass, the stars set, and the beacon does not shine. When after many years its tardy flame appears over the waves, the slave is bent beneath the weight of years; nothing remains to him but to reap misfortune, and the Chorus tells him that: ‘an old man is a shadow wandering in the light of day.’  
Ὄναρ ἡμερόφαντον νλαίνει.’

### BOOK III

#### CHAPTER 6

##### A manuscript of Lucile's

In the first flush of inspiration, I invited Lucile to imitate me. We spent days in mutual consultation, communicating to each other what we had done, and what we intended to do. We undertook works in common; guided by our instincts, we translated the finest and saddest passages in *Job* and Lucretius on life: the *Taedet animam meam viae meae*: my soul is weary of life, the *Homo natus de muliere*: man that is born of woman, the *Tum porro puer, ut saevis projectus ab undis navita*: then the new-born, like a seafarer abandoned to the pitiless waves, etc. Lucile's thoughts were nothing but feelings; they emerged with difficulty from her soul; but when she succeeded in expressing them, they were incomparable. She has left behind some thirty pages in manuscript; it is impossible to read them without being profoundly moved. The elegance, the sweetness, the dreaminess, the passionate sensibility revealed in these pages offers a combination of the Greek genius and the Germanic genius.

##### Dawn

*'What tender brightness comes to light the East!* Is it the young Aurora who half-opens her lovely eyes on the world, full of the languor of sleep! Graceful Goddess, hasten! Leave your nuptial couch, put on your crimson robe; let a soft sash bind you in its knots; let no sandals press your delicate feet; let no adornment profane your lovely hands made to gently open the doors of day. But you have already risen on the shadowy hill. Your golden hair falls in damp tresses on your rosy neck. From your mouth a pure and perfumed breath exhales. Tender deity, all Nature smiles in your presence; you alone shed tears and flowers are born.'

##### To the Moon

*'Chaste goddess!* Goddess, so pure that no blush of shame ever mingles with your tender light, I dare to adopt you as the confidante of my feelings. I have no more reason than you to feel shame in my heart. But often the memory of the injustice and blindness of men veils my brow with cloud, as yours is veiled. Like you, the errors and miseries of this world shape my dreams. But happier than I, citizen of heaven, you always retain your serenity: the storms and tempests that stir our globe glide beneath your tranquil orb. Goddess sympathetic to my sadness set your chill repose on my heart.'

##### Innocence

*'Daughter of Heaven,* sweet innocence, if I dared to attempt a feeble portrait of your nature, I would say that you serve as virtue in childhood, as wisdom in the springtime of life, as beauty in old age, and as happiness in misfortune; that, a stranger to our errors, you only shed pure tears, and that your smile owns nothing that is not celestial. Lovely innocence! How, with danger all around you, desire shapes all its features towards you: do you tremble, modest innocence? Do you seek to hide from the perils that menace you? No, I see you standing there, asleep, your head resting on an altar.'

My brother sometimes granted a few brief moments to the hermits of Combourg: he had the habit of bringing with him a young counsellor at the High Court of Brittany, Monsieur de Malfilâtre, a cousin of the unfortunate poet of that name. I think that Lucile, unknown to herself, had conceived a secret passion for this friend of my brother's, and that this stifled passion lay at the root of my sister's melancholy. She was afflicted moreover with Rousseau's obsession, but without his pride: she believed the whole world was conspiring against her. She travelled to Paris in 1789, accompanied by that sister Julie whose death she had deplored with a tenderness tinged with the sublime. All who knew her admired her, from Monsieur de Malesherbes to Chamfort. Thrown into the Revolution's crypts at Rennes, she was close to being re-incarcerated in the Château of Combourg, which had been turned into a gaol during the Terror. Released from prison, she married Monsieur de Caud, who left her a widow a year later. On return from my emigration, I was reunited with the friend of my childhood: I will tell you how she vanished, when it pleases God to afflict me.

### BOOK III

#### CHAPTER 7

The last lines written at the Vallée-aux-Loups – A disclosure  
concerning my secret life

Valleé-aux-Loups, November 1817.

Back from Montboissier, these are the last lines I will write in my hermitage: I am forced to leave it, filled with fine striplings which in their serried ranks already hide and crown their father. I will never again see the magnolia which promised its blossom for my girl of Florida's tomb, the Jerusalem pine and cedar of Lebanon consecrated to the memory of Jerome, the laurel of Grenada, the Greek plane-tree, the Armorican oak, at the foot of which I depicted Blanca, sang of Cymodocée, invented Velléda. These trees were born and grew with my dreams; of which they were the Hamadryads. They are about to pass under another's power: will their new master love them as I have loved them? He will let them die, or cut them down, perhaps: I can keep nothing on this earth. In bidding farewell to the woods of Aulnay, I will recall the farewell which I bade to the woods of Combourg: all my days are farewells.

The taste for poetry which Lucile inspired in me was like oil thrown onto the fire. My feelings acquired a new degree of strength; vain ideas of fame passed through my mind; for a moment I believed in my talent, but soon recovering a proper mistrust of myself, I began to doubt that talent, as I have always doubted it. I regarded my work as an evil temptation; I was angry with Lucile for engendering in me an unfortunate tendency: I stopped writing, and began to mourn my future glory, as one mourns a glory that has gone.

Returning to my former idleness, I became more aware of what my youth lacked: I was a mystery to myself. I could not look at a woman without being stirred; I blushed if she addressed a word to me. My shyness, already excessive with everyone, was so great with a woman that I would have preferred any torment to being left alone with that woman: she was no sooner gone than to recall her was my deepest wish. The portraits drawn by Virgil, Tibullus, and Masillon, presented themselves to my memory of course; but the images of my mother and sister, covering everything with their purity, made those veils denser which nature tried to lift; filial and brotherly tenderness deceived me as to any less disinterested tenderness. If the loveliest slaves of the seraglio had been handed over to me, I would not have known what to ask of them: chance enlightened me.

A neighbor of the Combourg estate came to spend a few days in the château with his very pretty wife. Something occurred in the village; everyone ran to the windows of the great hall to see. I arrived first; our fair guest was hard on my heels, and wishing to yield her my place I turned towards her: she involuntarily blocked my way, and I felt myself pressed between her and the window. I no longer knew what was happening around me.

At that moment, I became aware that to love and be loved in a manner as yet unknown to me, must be the supreme happiness. If I had done what other men do, I would have soon have learnt of the pains and pleasures of that passion whose seeds I carried; but everything in me took on an extraordinary character. The ardor of my imagination, my shyness, and my solitariness were such that instead of going abroad I fell back upon myself; lacking a real object of love, I evoked, through the power of my vague longings a

phantom which never left me. I do not know if the history of the human heart offers another example of this kind.

## BOOK III

### CHAPTER 8

#### Phantom of love

Thus I imagined a woman derived from all the women I had seen: she had the figure, the hair and the smile of the guest who had pressed me against her breast; I gave her the eyes of one young girl from the village, the complexion of another. The portraits of great ladies of the age of François I, Henri IV, and Louis XIV, with which the drawing-room was decorated, furnished me with other characteristics, and I stole certain graces from the pictures of the Virgin hung in church.

This invisible charmer followed me everywhere; I talked to her as if she was a real person; she varied according to my mood: Aphrodite without a veil, Diana clothed in dew and air, Thalia with her laughing mask, Hebe with the cup of youth, she often became a fairy who subjected Nature to my control. I retouched my canvas, endlessly; I took one grace from my beauty to replace it with another. I also changed her finery; I borrowed from every country, every age, every art; every religion. Then, when I had created a masterpiece, I dispersed my lines and colors once more; my unique woman was transformed into a multitude of women, in whom I idolized separately the charms I had adored in unison.

Pygmalion was less enamored of his statue: my problem was how to please mine. Not recognizing in myself any of the qualities that inspire love, I lavished upon myself all that I lacked. I sat a horse like Castor or Pollux, I played the lyre like Apollo; Mars wielded his arms with less strength and skill: a hero of history or romance, what fictitious adventures I heaped upon those fictions! The shades of Morven's daughters, the Sultans of Baghdad and Granada, the ladies of ancient manor houses; baths, perfumes, dances, Asiatic delights, were all appropriated by me with a magic wand.

A young queen would come to me, decked in diamonds and flowers (it was always my sylph); she sought me at midnight, through gardens filled with orange-trees, in the galleries of a palace washed by the sea's waves, on the balmy shores of Naples or Messina, under a sky of love that Endymion's star bathed with its light; she walked, a living statue by Praxiteles, among motionless statues, pale pictures, and silent frescoes whitened by the moon's rays: the soft sound of her movement over the marble mosaic mingled with the imperceptible murmur of the waves. Royal jealousy surrounded us. I fell at the knees of the sovereign of Enna's plain; the silken tresses loosed from her diadem caressed my brow, as she bent her sixteen-year old head over my face, and her hands rested on my breast, throbbing with respect and desire.

Emerging from these dreams, finding myself again a poor obscure little Breton, without fame, beauty, or talent, who would attract no one's attention, who would go unnoticed, whom no woman would ever love, despair seized me: I no longer dared lift my eyes to the dazzling image I had conjured to my side.



## BOOK III

### CHAPTER 9

#### Two years delirium – Occupations and dreams

This delirium lasted two whole years, during which my mental faculties reached the highest pitch of exaltation. I used to speak little, I no longer spoke at all; I still studied, but tossed aside my books; my taste for solitude intensified. I possessed all the symptoms of violent passion; my eyes grew hollow; I grew thin; I no longer slept; I was distracted, sad, ardent, and unsociable. My days rolled by in a manner that was wild, strange, insensate, maddened, and yet full of delight.

To the north of the château extended a terrain dotted with Druidic stones; I would go and sit on one of these stones at sunset. The golden summit of the wood, the splendor of the earth, the evening star glittering among the rose-colored clouds, sent me back to my dreams: I would have wished to enjoy the spectacle with the ideal object of my yearnings. I followed the star of day in thought; I gave him my beauty to lead along, so that he might present her, radiant beside him, to the universal homage. The evening breeze which stirred the web woven by a spider between the grass-tips, the moor-land lark settling on a stone, called me back to reality: I made my way back home, heart constricted, face lowered.

On stormy days in summer, I would climb to the top of the great west tower. The rumble of thunder in the garrets of the chateau, the torrents of rain that pounded down on the cone-shaped roofs of the towers, and the lightning furrowing the clouds and marking out the brass weathercocks with electric flame, excited my enthusiasm: like Ismen on the ramparts of Jerusalem, I invoked the thunder; I hoped it might bring me Armida.

Was the sky clear? I crossed the Great Mall, around which lay meadows separated by hedges of willow-trees. I had made a seat, like a nest, in one of these willows: there, alone between heaven and earth, I spent hours with the warblers; my nymph was at my side. I associated her image equally with the beauty of those spring nights filled with the freshness of dew, with the plaints of the nightingale, and the murmur of the breeze.

At other times, I would follow an abandoned track, or a stream adorned with its water-plants; I listened to the sounds that emanate from unfrequented places; I put my ear to every tree; I thought I might hear the moonlight singing in the woods: I wanted to tell of these pleasures and words died on my lips. I do not know how often I rediscovered my goddess in the tones of a voice, the tremors of a harp, in the velvet or liquid sounds of a horn or an organ. It would take too long to tell of the lovely voyages I made with my flower of love; how hand in hand we visited famous ruins, Venice, Rome, Athens, Jerusalem, Memphis, Carthage; how we crossed the seas; how we demanded happiness from the palm-trees of Tahiti, from the balm-filled groves of Ambon and Timor; how we went to wake the dawn on a summit of the Himalayas; how we descended the sacred rivers whose waves extended round pagodas with golden domes; how we slept on the banks of the Ganges, while the Bengali, perched on the mast of a bamboo craft, sang his Indian barcarole.

Heaven and earth no longer meant anything to me; I forgot the former especially: but if I no longer addressed my prayers to it, it heard the voice of my secret misery, since I suffered, and suffering is prayer.

### BOOK III

#### CHAPTER 10

##### My autumn joys

The sadder the season, the more it matched my mood: cold weather, by making travel less easy, isolated the inhabitants of the countryside: one felt better in human shelter.

A moral character is attached to autumn scenes: those leaves which fall like our years, those flowers which fade like our hours, those clouds that flee like our illusions, that light which weakens like our intellect, that sun which cools like our love, those waves that freeze like our life, have a secret sympathy with our destiny.

I viewed with inexpressible pleasure the return of the stormy season, the flight of swans and woodpigeons, the gathering of rooks on the meadow by the pond, and their perching at the fall of night on the highest oaks of the Great Mall. When evening raised a bluish mist at crossroads in the forests, when the moans or whistles of the wind wailed in the withered mosses, I entered into complete ownership of my natural sympathies. Did I meet with some laborer in the depths of a fallow field? I would stop to look at that man engendered in the shade of those ears of corn among which he must be harvested, and who turning the earth of his tomb with the blade of the plough mingled his hot sweat with the cold rains of autumn: the furrow he dug was the monument destined to survive him. What had my elegant daemon to do with that? Through her magic, she transported me to the banks of the Nile, showed me the Pyramids of Egypt buried in sand, as one day the Armorican furrow would be hidden by heather: I congratulated myself on having set my fables of happiness beyond the circle of mortal realities.

In the evening I embarked on the pond, steering my boat alone, in the midst of bulrushes and the large floating water-lily leaves. There, the swallows gathered again preparing to leave our climes. I did not lose a single note of their twittering: Tavernier as a child would have been less attentive to a traveler's tale. They played above the water at sunset, chasing insects, hurling themselves together through the air, as if to test their wings, fell towards the surface of the lake, then came and hung on the reeds that their weight scarcely bent down, and which they filled with their confused song.

## BOOK III

### CHAPTER 11

#### Incantation

Night fell: the reeds agitated their fields of distaffs and two-edged swords, among which the feathered caravan, moorhens, teal, kingfishers, and snipe fell silent; the lake beat at its margins; autumn's great voice rose from the marshes and woods: I moored my boat on the shore, and returned to the château. Ten o'clock sounded. Scarcely having retired to my room, opening my windows, and fixing my gaze on the sky, I would begin an incantation. I mounted with my sorceress towards the clouds: tangled in their nets and tresses, I would travel, as the storms willed, stirring the tops of the forests, shaking the mountain summits, or whirling above the seas. Plunging through space, descending from the throne of God to the gates of the abyss, worlds were delivered up to the force of my passion. In the midst of the elemental chaos, I drunkenly married the sense of danger with that of pleasure. The breath of the north wind only brought me the sighs of sensual delight; the murmur of the rain invited me to slumber on a woman's breast. The words I addressed to that woman would have given old age back its senses, and warmed marble tombs. Ignorant of all, knowing all, at once virgin and lover, innocent Eve, and fallen Eve, the enchantress through whom my madness arose was a blend of mysteries and passions: I set her on an altar and adored her. The pride of being loved by her increased my love still more. Did she walk? I prostrated myself to be trodden by her feet. I was flustered by her smile; I trembled at the sound of her voice; I quivered with desire, if I touched what she had touched. The air, exhaled from her moist mouth, penetrated the marrow of my bones, flowed in my veins instead of blood. A single one of her looks sent me flying to the ends of the earth; what desert would not have sufficed for me, with her there!! By her side, the lions' den had become a palace, and millions of centuries would have been too short to exhaust the fires by which I felt myself inflamed.

To this fury a moral idolatry was joined: through another quirk of my imagination, that Phryne, who clasped me in her arms, was also to me glory, and above all honour; the virtue with which she achieved her noblest sacrifices, the genius with which it gave birth to the rarest thought, would scarcely yield an idea of that other kind of happiness. In my marvelous creation I found at the same moment all the delights of the senses and all the pleasures of the soul. Overwhelmed, as if submerged, by this double joy, I no longer knew what my true existence was; I was human and not human; I became cloud, wind, sound; I was a pure spirit, an aerial being, singing sovereign happiness. I stripped myself of my nature to merge with the daughter of my desires, to transform myself into her, to touch beauty most intimately, to be at the same moment passion given and received, love and the object of love.

Suddenly, struck by my madness, I flung myself on my couch; I rolled about with grief; I drenched my bed with bitter tears which no one saw and which flowed pitifully, for one who did not exist.

## BOOK III

### CHAPTER 12

#### Temptation

Soon, unable to rest in my tower, I descended through the shadows, opened the stairway door furtively like a murderer, and went off to wander in the great wood.

Having marched towards adventure, throwing my arms about, grasping the breezes that escaped me like the shade that was the object of my pursuit, I leant against the trunk of a beech-tree: I watched the crows that I forced to fly from one tree to settle on another, or the Moon moving through the naked heights of the plantation: I should have liked to inhabit that dead world, which mirrored the pallor of a sepulchre. I felt neither the chill, nor the moisture of the night; not even dawn's glacial breath would have dragged me from my thoughts, if the village clock had not made itself heard at that moment.

In most of the villages of Brittany, it is usual to ring the chimes for the dead at daybreak. This peal, of three repeated notes, creates a little monotonous air, rural and melancholy. Nothing was better suited to my sick and wounded soul, than to be returned to the tribulations of existence by the bell which announced its end. I pictured to myself the shepherd expiring in his un-regarded hut, then buried in a cemetery no less unknown. What had he achieved on this earth? What had I myself done in this world? Since I must vanish at last, would it not be better to depart in the freshness of morning, and arrive in good time, than make the voyage under the burden and in the heat of the day? The blush of desire mounted to my face; the idea of no longer being seized my heart in the manner of a sudden joy. In my times of youthful error, I had often wished not to survive happiness: there is in first success a degree of felicity that made me long for destruction.

Bound ever more tightly to my phantom, unable to enjoy what did not exist, I was like those mutilated men who dream of bliss unattainable by them, and who conjure a dream whose pleasures equal the torments of hell. Moreover I had a presentiment of the wretchedness of my future fate: ingenious in contriving suffering for myself, I had placed myself between two sources of despair; sometimes I considered myself no more than a cipher, incapable of rising above the common herd; sometimes I seemed to detect in myself qualities which would never be appreciated. A secret instinct warned me that in making my way in the world I would find nothing of what I sought.

Everything nourished the bitterness of my self-disgust: Lucile was unhappy; my mother did not console me; my father made me aware of the horrors of life. His gloominess increased with the years; age stiffened his soul as it did his body; he spied on me ceaselessly in order to reprimand me. When I returned from my wild excursions and saw him sitting on the steps, I would rather have died than enter the château. But this would only serve to delay my torture: obliged to appear at supper, I would sit guiltily on the edge of my chair, my cheeks wet with rain, my hair tangled. Under my father's gaze, I sat motionless with sweat bathing my brow: the last glimmer of reason left me.

Now I come to a moment when I need strength to confess my weakness. The man who attempts his own life shows the feebleness of his character rather than the power of his soul.

I owned a hunting rifle whose worn trigger often fired when un-cocked. I charged this gun with three bullets, and went to a remote part of the Great Mall. I cocked the weapon, placed the muzzle in my mouth, and struck the butt on the ground: I repeated the attempt several times: the gun did not fire; the appearance of a gamekeeper altered my resolution. An unconscious and involuntary fatalist, I concluded my hour had not yet come, and I deferred the execution of my plan to another day. If I had killed myself, all I have achieved would have been buried with me; nothing would have been known of the tale which led to my catastrophe; I would have swelled the crowd of nameless unfortunates, I would not have induced anyone to follow the trail of my sorrows, as a wounded man leaves a trail of blood.

Those who might be troubled by these scenes, and be tempted to imitate these follies, those who might attach themselves to my memory by means of my illusions, must remember that they hear only a dead man's voice. Reader, whom I shall never know, nothing remains: nothing is left of me but that which I am in the hands of the living God who has judged me.

### BOOK III

#### CHAPTER 13

Illness – I am afraid and refuse to enter into the ecclesiastical state – A planned passage to India

An illness, the fruit of this disordered life, put an end to the torments through which the first inspirations of the Muse and the first assault of the passions touched me. These passions which taxed my spirit, these passions as yet ill-defined, resembled storms at sea that rush on from every point of the compass: a pilot lacking experience, I did not know how to trim my sail to the uncertain breeze. My chest swelled, fever seized me; they sent for an excellent doctor, named Cheftel, whose son played a role in the Marquis de la Rouërie affair, from Bazouches, a little town fifteen or so miles from Combourg (As I advance in life I meet again people from my Memoirs: The widow of Doctor Cheftel's son came to me to apply for entry into the Marie-Thérèse Infirmary: one more witness to my veracity. Note: Paris, 1834). He examined me carefully, prescribed certain remedies and declared that above all it was necessary to remove me from my current mode of life.

I was in danger for six weeks. One morning my mother came and sat on my bed, and said: 'It is time for you to decide; your brother is able to obtain a benefice for you; but before you enter the seminary you must think about it carefully, for though I desire you to embrace the ecclesiastical state, I would rather see you a man of the world than a scandalous priest.'

Having read this, one can judge whether my pious mother's suggestion came at a timely moment. In the major events of my life, I have always known immediately what to evade: a sense of honor prompts me. An abbé? I would consider myself ridiculous. A bishop? The majesty of my office would overawe me and I would respectfully recoil from the altar. As a bishop should I make an effort to acquire virtue, or content myself with concealing my vices? I felt too weak to play the first part, too honest for the second. Those who call me hypocritical and ambitious know little of me: I shall never succeed in the world, precisely because I lack a passion and a vice, ambition and hypocrisy. At most the first would be, in me, wounded self-esteem; I might sometimes desire to be minister or king so as to mock my enemies; but after twenty-four hours I would throw my portfolio or crown out of the window.

So I told my mother that my calling to the ecclesiastical state was not strong enough. I was altering my plans for the second time: I had not wished to become a sailor; I no longer wished to be a priest. A military career remained; I liked the idea: but how would I tolerate the loss of my independence and the constraints of European discipline? A ridiculous idea entered my head: I declared I would go to Canada to clear forests, or to India to take service in the army of one of that country's princes.

By one of those contrasts that one remarks in all men, my father, so prudent normally, was never greatly shocked by an adventurous project. He complained to my mother about my changeableness, but he decided to support my passage to India. I was sent to Saint-Malo; they were fitting out a vessel for Pondicherry.

### BOOK III

#### CHAPTER 14

A moment in my native town – Memory of La Villeneuve and the tribulations of my childhood – I am recalled to Combours – Last interview with my father – I enter the service -Farewell to Combours

Two months rolled by: I found myself alone again in my native isle; La Villeneuve had just died there. On going to weep for her beside the poor empty bed where she had expired, I noticed the little wicker go-cart in which I had learned to stand upright on this sad globe. I pictured my old nurse, fixing her feeble gaze on that wheeled basket at the foot of her bed: this first memorial of my life facing the last memorial of the life of my second mother, the thought of the prayers for her charge that dear Villeneuve addressed to heaven on leaving this world, that proof of an attachment so constant, so disinterested, so pure, moved my heart with tenderness, regret, and gratitude.

There was nothing else of my past in Saint-Malo: I searched the harbor in vain for the boats in whose rigging I had played; they had gone or been dismantled; in the town the house where I had been born had been transformed into an inn. I had scarcely left my cradle and already a whole world had vanished. A stranger in my childhood haunts, those who met me asked who I was, for the sole reason that my head had had risen a few inches higher from the ground towards which it will bow again in a few years. How swiftly and how frequently we change our existence and our illusions! Friends leave us, others take their place; our relationships alter: there is always a time when we possessed nothing of what we possess, and a time when we have nothing of what we had. Man does not have a single, consistent life; he has several laid end to end, and that is his misfortune.

Now without a companion, I explored the arena that once saw my castles of sand: *campos ubi Troia fuit*: the fields where Troy once stood. I walked along the empty sea-shore. The beaches abandoned by the tide offered me the image of desolate spaces that illusions leave around us when they fade. My compatriot Abelard gazed at the waves as I did, eight hundred years ago, remembering Héloïse; as I did he watched the vessels flee (*ad horizontis undas*: to the horizon's waters) and his ear was lulled like mine by the harmony of the waves. I exposed myself to the breakers while giving myself up to the gloomy fancies that I had brought from the woods of Combours. A headland, named Lavarde, put an end to my wanderings: sitting on the point of this headland, lost in the bitterest thoughts, I remembered that these same rocks had served to hide me in my childhood, at times of festivity; I swallowed my tears there, while my friends were drunk with joy. I felt myself no more loved or happy now. Soon I would leave my homeland to eke out my days in varied climes. These thoughts sickened me to death, and I was tempted to throw myself into the waves.

A letter recalled me to Combours: I arrived, I supped with my family; my father did not utter a word, my mother sighed, Lucile looked dismayed; at ten we retired to bed. I questioned my sister; she knew nothing. Next morning at eight I was sent for. I descended: my father was waiting for me in his study.

‘Monsieur le Chevalier,’ he said to me: ‘you must renounce your follies. Your brother has obtained a second-lieutenant’s commission for you in the Navarre Regiment. You are to go to Rennes and from there to Cambrai. Here are a hundred louis; be careful with them. I am old and ill; I have not long to live. Conduct yourself like a man of honour, and never disgrace your name.’

He kissed me. I felt that stern and wrinkled face press tenderly against mine: it was the last paternal embrace I received.

The Comte de Chateaubriand, a man so formidable in my eyes, appeared at that moment simply as a father completely worthy of my affection. I seized his emaciated hand and wept. He was beginning to suffer from paralysis; it brought him to his grave. His left hand would jerk convulsively and he was obliged to restrain it with his right. It was holding his arm in this way, and having handed me his old sword, that without giving me time to recover, he led me to the cabriolet which was waiting for me in the Green Court. He made me get up, in front of him. The postilion drove off, while I said farewell with my eyes to my mother and sister, dissolved in tears on the steps.

I drove along the causeway by the pond; I saw the reeds inhabited by my swallows, the mill-stream and the meadow; I cast a look at the château. Then, like Adam after sinning, I went out into an unknown land: 'and the world was all before him'.

Since that day, I have only seen Combours three times: after my father's death, we all met there in mourning, to divide our inheritance and say adieu. On another occasion I accompanied my mother to Combours; she was concerned with furnishing the chateau; she expected my brother there, who was bringing my sister-in-law to Brittany. My brother never arrived; with his young wife, he was soon to receive, at the executioner's hands, a different support for his head than the pillow my mother's hands had prepared. Finally, I passed through Combours a third time, on the way to Saint-Malo to embark for America. The château was deserted; I was obliged to go down to the steward's lodge. When, wandering down the Great Mall, I saw, at the end of a dark alley, the empty steps, the closed doors and windows, I felt ill. With difficulty, I made my way back to the village; I sent for my horses, and left in the middle of the night.

After fifteen years absence, before leaving France again to travel to the Holy Land, I went to Fougères to embrace what was left of my family. I had not the heart to make a pilgrimage to the fields with which the most vital part of my existence is connected. It was in the woods of Combours that I became what I am, that I began to feel the first assault of that *ennui* which I have dragged with me through life, of that sadness which has been my torment and my bliss. There, I searched for a heart that could understand mine; there, I saw my family reunite, then disperse. My father dreamt there of seeing his name re-established, the fortunes of his house revived: another illusion which time and revolution have dispelled. Of the six children we were, there are now only three: my brother, Julie and Lucile are no more, my mother has died of grief; my father's ashes have been snatched from his grave.

If my works survive me, if I am to leave a name behind, perhaps one day, guided by these Memoirs, some traveler will visit the places I have described. He might recognize the château; but he would search in vain for the great wood: the cradle of my dreams has vanished like those dreams. Left standing alone on its rock, the ancient keep mourns the oaks, old companions which surrounded it, and protected it against the tempest. Solitary, like that keep, I too have seen the family that adorned my days and lent me its shelter fall around me: happily my life is not founded on earth as solidly as those towers where I spent my youth, and man resists the storm less strongly than the monuments raised by his hands.



## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 1

Berlin – Potsdam – Frederick

Berlin, March 1821. (Revised July 1846)

It is a long way from Combourg to Berlin, from a youthful dreamer to an old minister. I find among the words preceding these: ‘In how many places have I already continued writing these Memoirs, and in what place will I finish them?’

Nearly four years have passed between the date when I wrote the facts just recounted and that on which I resume these Memoirs. A thousand things have happened; another man has appeared in me, the politician: I am not much taken with him. I have defended the freedoms of France, which alone can make the legitimate monarchy durable. With the *Conservateur* I have put Monsieur de Villèle in power; I have seen the Duc de Berry die and honored his memory. In order to reconcile all parties, I have left France; I have accepted the Berlin Embassy.

Yesterday I was at Potsdam, an ornate barracks, empty now of soldiers: I studied the imitation Julian in his imitation Athens. At Sans-Souci they showed me the table at which a great German monarch turned the Encyclopedists’ maxims into little French verses; Voltaire’s room, decorated with wooden apes and parrots, the mill which he who ravaged whole provinces made a point of respecting, the tombs of the horse César and the greyhounds Diane, Amourette, Biche, Superbe and Pax. The royal infidel even took pleasure in profaning the religion of the tomb by raising mausoleums to his dogs; he had marked out a burial-place for himself, less from contempt for men, than to display his belief in nothingness.

They took me to see the new palace, already decaying. In the old palace of Potsdam they preserve the tobacco stains, the worn and soiled armchairs; indeed every relic of the renegade prince’s un-cleanliness. These places at once immortalize the dirtiness of the cynic, the impudence of the atheist, the tyranny of the despot, and the glory of the soldier.

Only one thing attracted my attention: the hands of a clock frozen at the moment when Frederick expired; I was deceived by the immobility of the image: hours do not suspend their flight; it is not man that stops time, it is time that stops man. What is more, it does not matter what part we have played in life; the brilliance or obscurity of our doctrines, our wealth or poverty, our joys or sorrows make no difference to our length of days. Whether the hands of the clock circle a golden face or a wooden one, whether the face, large or small, fills the bezel of a ring, or the rose-window of a cathedral, the hour has only the one duration.

In a vault of the Protestant Church, immediately beneath the chair of the defrocked schismatic, I saw the tomb of the royal sophist. The tomb is of bronze; when one strikes it, it rings. The gendarme, who sleeps in that bronze bed, could not even be dragged from sleep by the noise of his fame; he will not wake till the trumpet sounds, when it will call him onto his last field of battle, face to face with the God of armies.

I had such a need to alter the impression I had received, that I sought relief by visiting the Maison-de-Marbre. The king who had ordered its construction had addressed a few honorable words to me formerly,

when, as a humble officer, I passed through his army. At least this king shared the ordinary weaknesses of humanity; commonplace, like them, he took refuge in his pleasures. Do those two skeletons go any way to explain today the difference that formerly existed between them, when one was Frederick the Great, and the other Frederick-William II? Sans-Souci and the Maison-de-Marbre are equally ruins without a master.

All in all, though the enormity of the events of our day diminishes those of the past, though Rosbach, Lissa, Liegnitz, Torgau etc., etc., were only skirmishes compared with the battles of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Moscow, Frederick suffers less than others when compared with the giant chained in St Helena. The King of Prussia and Voltaire are two of the oddest figures to be grouped together who ever lived: the latter destroyed a society with the same philosophy that allowed the former to found a kingdom.

The evenings in Berlin are long. I occupy a house belonging to Madame the Duchess of Dino. At nightfall, my secretaries leave me. When there is no entertainment at court for the marriage of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Nicholas (now the Emperor and Empress of Russia: Note, 1832), I stay in. Sitting alone in front of a cheerless stove, I hear nothing but the shouts of the sentinel at the Brandenburg Gate, and the steps in the snow of the man who whistles the hours. How shall I spend my time? Reading? I have scarcely a book. What if I were to continue my Memoirs?

You had left me on the road from Combours to Rennes: I alighted in the latter town at the house of one of my relations. He told me with great delight that a lady of his acquaintance, travelling to Paris, had a spare seat in her carriage, and that he would try hard to persuade this lady to take me with her. I accepted; cursing my relative's courtesy. He settled the matter, and soon presented me to my travelling companion, a sprightly, unselfconscious milliner, who burst out laughing on seeing me. At midnight the horses arrived and we set off.

There I was in a post-chaise, alone with a woman, in the middle of the night. How was I, who had never in my life looked at a woman without blushing, to descend from the height of my dreams to this terrifying reality? I did not know where I was; I huddled in my corner of the carriage for fear of touching Madame Rose's dress. When she spoke to me, I stammered unable to reply. She was obliged to pay the postilion, and see to everything, since I was incapable of anything. At daybreak, she looked with fresh amazement at this booby with whom she regretted being saddled.

As soon as the local scenery began to change, and I no longer recognized the clothes and accents as those of Breton peasants, I fell into a profound depression, which increased the contempt Madame Rose had for me. I became aware of the sentiment I had inspired, and I received from this first trial in the world an impression that time has not completely effaced. I was born unsociable but unashamed; I felt the modesty of my years, but no embarrassment. When I realized that this fine aspect of my nature made me ridiculous, my unsociability turned into an insurmountable shyness. I could not speak another word: I felt I had something to hide, and this something was a virtue; I made up my mind to conceal myself in order to wear my innocence in peace.

We drew nearer Paris. On the way down from Saint-Cyr, I was struck by the width of the roads and the neatness of the fields. Soon we reached Versailles: the orangery and the marble stairs amazed me. The success of the American war had garnered trophies for Louis XIV's palace; the Queen reigned there in all the splendor of her youth and beauty; the throne, so close to its fall, seemed never to have been more

stable. And I, an obscure passer-by, was destined to survive this pomp, and live to see the woods of Trianon as empty as those I had just left behind.

At last we entered Paris. I discovered a mocking expression on every face: like the gentleman from Périgord in Moliere, I thought that they were gazing at me to make fun of me. Madame Rose had me taken to the Hôtel de l'Europe in the Rue du Mail and hastened to disburden herself of her simpleton. Scarcely had I descended from the carriage, than she said to the porter: 'Give this gentleman a room' - She added: 'Your servant,' making me a slight curtsy. I have never seen Madame Rose again in my life.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 2

My Brother – My Cousin Moreau – My sister the Comtesse de Farcy

Berlin, March 1821.

A woman mounted a steep, dark staircase in front of me, holding a labelled key in her hand; a Savoyard followed me with my little trunk. Reaching the third floor, the servant opened a door; the Savoyard placed the trunk across the arms of a chair. The servant said: 'Does Monsieur require anything?' – 'No', I replied. Three loud whistles were emitted; the servant shouted: 'I'm on my way!' rushed out, closing the door, and tumbled down the stairs with the Savoyard. When I found myself shut in, alone, my heart tightened in such a strange manner I was near to taking the road back to Brittany. Everything I had heard about Paris returned to my mind; I was embarrassed in a hundred ways. I would have liked to go to bed, and the bed was unmade; I was hungry but I did not know how to dine. I was afraid of not knowing how to act: ought I to call the hotel staff? Ought I to go downstairs? To whom should I speak? I ventured to put my head out of the window: I could only see a little inner yard, as deep as a well, where people went to and fro without a thought in their life for the prisoner on the third floor. I went and sat down again near the dirty alcove where I was to sleep, reduced to contemplating the personages on the paper with which its walls were hung. A distant sound of voices was heard, grew louder, neared, my door opened: in came my brother and one of my cousins, son of one of my mother's sisters who had made rather a poor marriage. Madame Rose had taken pity on the half-wit after all; she had sent word to my brother, whose address she had been given at Rennes, to say that I had arrived in Paris. My brother embraced me. My cousin Moreau was a large, fat man, smeared all over with snuff, who ate like an ogre, talked a great deal, was always moving about, puffing, choking, mouth half-open, tongue half-out, who knew everybody, and spent his life in gambling dens, ante-rooms, and salons. 'Well, Chevalier,' he cried, 'here you are in Paris; I'm going to take you to Madame Chastenay's! Who was this woman whose name I heard pronounced for the first time? The suggestion turned me against my cousin Moreau. 'No doubt the Chevalier is in need of rest,' said my brother; 'we will go and see Madame de Farcy, then he shall return for dinner and go to bed.'

A joyful feeling entered my heart: the memory of my family in the midst of an indifferent world was like balm to me. We went out. Cousin Moreau raised a storm on the subject of my wretched room, and urged my host to install me at least one floor lower down. We climbed into my brother's carriage, and drove to the convent where Madame de Farcy lived.

Julie had been in Paris for some time, to consult the doctors. Her charming face, her elegance and her wit had soon made her much sought after. I have already said that she was born with a true poetic talent. She has become a saint, having been one of the most attractive women of her generation: the Abbé Carron has written her life. Those apostles who travel everywhere seeking souls, feel the love for them that a Father of the Church attributed to the Creator: 'When a soul arrives at God': said this Father, with the simplicity of heart of an early Christian, and the naivety of Greek genius, 'God takes her on his knees, and calls her his daughter.'

Lucile has left behind a poignant lamentation: 'To the sister I no longer have'. The Abbé Carron's admiration for Julie explains and justifies Lucile's words. The life written by a holy priest also shows that I spoke the truth in the preface to my *Génie du Christianisme*, and serves as proof of certain elements of my Memoirs.

Julie an innocent gave herself to repentance; she devoted the riches won from her austerities to redeeming her brothers; and following the example of the illustrious African woman who was her patron saint, she became a martyr.

The Abbé Carron, author of the *Vie des Justes*, is that ecclesiastic, my compatriot, the François de Paule of the exiles, whose fame attested to by the afflicted, even cut across the fame of Bonaparte. The voice of a poor proscribed clergyman was not stifled by the noise of a Revolution that overwhelmed society; he seemed to have been brought back expressly from a foreign country to pen my sister's virtues: he sought amongst our ruins; he discovered a victim and a forgotten tomb.

When the new hagiography depicted Julie's sacred sufferings, one thought one was hearing Bossuet in his sermon on Mademoiselle de La Vallière's profession of faith.

'Shall it dare to be concerned about that body so tender, so dear; so gentle? Is no pity to be taken on that delicate complexion? On the contrary! The soul conducts itself towards the body as towards its most dangerous seducer; the soul sets out its boundaries; straightened on all sides, it can only breathe at the side of God.'

I cannot defend myself from a certain embarrassment on finding my name, once more, in the last lines concerning Julie, traced by the hand of the venerable historian. What am I with my frailties doing juxtaposed with such great perfections? Have I adhered to all that my sister's note made me promise, the one I received during my emigration to London? Does a book satisfy God? Is it not my life I must offer up to Him? And is that life in accord with the *Génie du Christianisme*? What matter that I have painted more or less brilliant pictures of religion, if my passions cast a shadow on my faith! I have not reached the ultimate; I have not adopted the hair-shirt: that tunic added to my viaticum would have drunk and dried up my sweat. But I, a weary traveler, sit by the side of the road: tired or not, I must rise again to reach the place my sister reached.

Julie's fame lacks for nothing: the Abbé Carron has written her life; Lucile has mourned her death.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 3

Julie in society – Dinner – Pommereul – Madame de Chastenay

Berlin, 30th March 1821.

When I saw Julie again in Paris, she was in all the pomp of worldly vanity; she appeared covered with flowers, adorned with those necklaces, veiled with those scented fabrics that Saint Clement forbade the early Christians. Saint Basil wanted the middle of the night to be for the solitary what morning is for others, so they might benefit from nature's silence. The middle of the night was the hour when Julie went to gatherings at which her verses, recited by herself with marvelous musicality, were the principle attraction.

Julie was infinitely lovelier than Lucile; she had tender blue eyes and dark hair which she wore coiled or in waves. Her hands and arms, models of whiteness and form, added by their graceful movements something even more charming to her charming appearance. She was radiant, lively, and laughed often and unaffectedly, showing pearly teeth as she laughed. A host of portraits from Louis XIV's time resembled Julie, among others those of the three Mortemarts; but she was more elegant than Madame de Montespan.

Julie received me with that tenderness only a sister can show. I felt safe, enfolded by her arms, her ribbons, her lace and her bouquet of roses. Nothing can replace a woman's loyalty, delicacy and devotion; one is neglected by brothers and friends; one is misjudged by one's companions; but never by one's mother, sister or wife. When Harold was killed at the Battle of Hastings, no one could recognize him among the piles of dead; it was necessary to call on a young girl, his beloved. She came, and the unfortunate prince was found by Edith, the swan-necked: '*Editha swanes-hales, quod sonat collum cygni.*'

My brother brought me back to my hotel; he ordered my dinner, and left me. I dined alone, I went sadly to bed. I spent my first night in Paris pining for my moors, and trembling at the uncertainty of my future.

At eight the next morning, my fat cousin arrived; he was already on his fifth or sixth errand. 'Well, Chevalier! We will breakfast: we will dine with Pommereul, and this evening I will take you to Madame Chastenay's. This seemed to be my fate, and I resigned myself. All happened according to my cousin's wishes. After breakfast, he proposed to show me Paris, and dragged me through the dirtiest streets round the Palais-Royal, while telling me about the dangers to which a young man was exposed. We were punctual for our dinner at an eating-house. Everything served to us seemed bad to me. The conversation and the guests revealed a new world to me. The talk was about the Court, financial proposals, sittings of the Academy, the women and intrigues of the day, the latest play, and the successes of actors, actresses and authors.

There were several Bretons among the guests, including the Chevalier de Guer and Pommereul. The latter was a good talker, who has since written about a number of Bonaparte's campaigns, and whom I was destined to meet again as the Director of Censorship.

Pommereul under the Empire enjoyed some sort of reputation for his hatred of the nobility. When a gentleman was made a chamberlain, he cried out joyfully: 'Another chamber-pot at the head of these nobles!' And yet Pommereul claimed, with reason, to be a gentleman. He signed himself Pommereux, being descended from the Pommereux family mentioned in the letters of Madame de Sévigné.

After dinner, my brother wished to take me to the theatre, but my cousin claimed me for Madame de Chastenay, and I went with him to meet my fate.

I saw a beautiful woman, no longer in her first youth, but still capable of inspiring love. She received me with kindness, tried to put me at my ease, and asked me about my province and my regiment. I was gauche and embarrassed; I signaled to my cousin to cut short the visit. But he, without a glance my way, never stopped talking about my merits, declaring that I had written poetry at my mother's breast, and calling on me to celebrate Madame Chastenay in verse. She freed me from this painful situation, begged my pardon that she was obliged to go out, and invited me to return to see her the following morning, in so sweet a voice that I promised to obey without a thought.

I returned the following day alone: I found her in bed in an elegantly furnished room. She told me that she was a little indisposed, and had the bad habit of rising late. I found myself, for the first time in my life, at the bedside of a woman other than my mother or sister. She had noticed my shyness the previous evening; she overcame it so completely that I dared to express myself with a kind of abandon. I forget what I said to her; but I still seem to see her look of astonishment. She stretched out a half-naked arm to me and the most beautiful hand in the world, saying with a smile: 'We will tame you.' I did not even kiss that lovely hand; I withdrew quite confused. I left the next day for Cambrai. Who was that lady of Chastenay? I have no idea; she passed through my life like a charming shade.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 4

Cambrai – The Navarre Regiment – La Martinière

Berlin, March 1821.

The mail-coach took me to my garrison town. One of my brothers-in-law, the Vicomte de Châteaubourg, (he had married my sister Bénigne, the widow of the Comte de Québriac) had given me letters of recommendation to the officers in my regiment. The Chevalier de Guénan, a man who kept very good company, introduced me to a mess where a number of officers dined who were noted for their talents, Messieurs Achard, Des Maillis and La Martinière. The Marquis de Mortemarte was colonel of the regiment, the Comte d'Andrezel, major: I was placed under the special protection of the latter. I met both of them in later years: the former became my colleague in the Chamber of Peers; the other requested of me certain services which I was happy to render him. There is a melancholy pleasure in meeting again with those we have known at different periods of our life, and in considering the changes that have occurred in their existence and ours. Like markers left behind us, they trace the path we have followed through the desert of the past.

Joining the regiment in civilian clothes, I had donned a soldier's garb within twenty-four hours; I felt as if I had worn it always. My uniform was blue and white, like the clothes of my vow years ago: I marched under the same colors, as a child and as a young man. I was submitted to none of the trials which the second-lieutenants were in the habit of inflicting on new recruits; I have no idea why they did not venture to indulge in their military horseplay with me. I was with the regiment scarcely a fortnight before I was treated as an 'old hand.' I learnt the theory and practice of fire-arms readily; I passed through the grades of corporal and sergeant to the plaudits of my instructors. My room became the meeting-place for old captains and young second-lieutenants alike: the former went over their campaigns with me; the latter confided their love-affairs.

La Martinière would seek me out to accompany him past the door of one of Cambrai's beauties whom he adored; this occurred five or six times a day. He was very ugly and his face was pitted with pock-marks. He would tell me of his passion while drinking large glasses of red-currant syrup, which I sometimes paid for.

Everything would have been fine but for my foolish addiction to clothes; the army then affected the severity of Prussian dress: a small cap, little curls worn close to the head, a tightly tied pig-tail, and a carefully buttoned coat. It displeased me greatly; I submitted to these shackles in the morning, but in the evening, when I hoped not to be seen by my superiors, I decked myself out in a much larger hat; the barber brushed out my curls and loosened my pig-tail; I unbuttoned and turned back the facings of my coat; and in this amorous undress I would go courting on La Martinière's behalf, under the window of his cruel Flemish lady. Then one day I came face to face with Monsieur d'Andrezel: 'What is this, Sir?' said the terrible major: 'Consider yourself under arrest for three days.' I was humiliated somewhat; but I recognized the truth of the proverb, that every evil contains some good; it delivered me from my friend's love-affair.



Beside Fénelon's tomb I re-read Télémaque: I was not really in the mood for the story of the cow and the bishop.

These memories of the start of my career amuse me. Passing through Cambrai with the King, after the Hundred Days, I looked for the place where I once lived, and the coffee-house I used to frequent: I could not find them; everything had vanished, men and monuments.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 5

#### My father's death

In the same year that I was serving my military apprenticeship at Cambrai, the death of Frederick II occurred: I am now ambassador to that great king's great-nephew, and am writing this section of my *Memoirs* in Berlin. To that news important to the world at large, succeeded other tidings, melancholy ones for me: Lucile wrote to tell me that my father had been carried off by a stroke, on the eve of the Angevin Fair, which was one of my childhood joys.

Among the authentic documents that serve to guide me I find my parents' death certificates. I record these certificates, which also in their particular way signify the death of an age, here, as a page of history.

'Extract from the register of deaths of Combourg Parish, for 1786, in which is written what follows, *folio 8, verso*:

*'The body of the noble and puissant my Lord René de Chateaubriand, Knight, Count of Combourg, Lord of Gaugres, Le Plessis-l'Épine, Boulet, Malestroit en Dol, and other places, husband of the noble and puissant lady Apolline-Jeanne-Suzanne de Bedée de la Bouëtardais, Countess of Combourg, aged about sixty-nine years, who died in his Château of Combourg, on the sixth of September, at about eight in the evening, has been buried on the eighth, in the family crypt, situated in the body of our church at Combourg, in the presence of the noblemen, judicial officers and other worthy burghers undersigned. Signatories to the register: the Comte du Petitbois, de Montlouët, de Chateaudassy, Delaunay, Morault, Noury de Mauny, barrister; Hermer, prosecutor; Petit, barrister and prosecutor fiscal; Robiou, Portal, Le Douarin de Trevelec, dean of Dingé; Sévin, rector.'*

In the collation issued in 1812 by Monsieur Lodin, mayor of Combourg, the nineteen words indicating titles: noble and puissant my Lord, etc., are crossed out.

'Extract from the register of deaths for the town of Saint-Servan, first district of the department of Îlle-et-Vilaine, for Year VI of the Republic, folio 35, recto, in which is written what follows:

*'The twelfth Prairial, in year six of the French Republic, before me, Jacques Bourdasse, municipal officer for the district of Saint-Servan, elected as public official on the fourth of Floreal last, appear Jean Baslé, gardener, and Joseph Boulin, day labourer, who have attested that Apolline-Jeanne-Suzanne de Bedée, widow of René-Auguste de Chateaubriand, died at the house of citizeness Gouyon, situated at La Ballue, in that district, this day, at one hour after noon. After this declaration, of whose truth I am assured, I have drawn up the present certificate, which Jean Baslé alone has signed with me, Joseph Boulin having declared that he does not know how, on being questioned concerning this.*

*Written in the public office, on the said year and day. Signed Jean-Baslé and Bourdasse.'*

In the first extract, the old society endures: Monsieur de Chateaubriand is a noble and puissant lord, etc., etc.: the witnesses are noblemen and worthy burghers; among the signatories I find the Marquis de Montlouët, who used to stay at the château of Combourg in the winter, the Abbé Sévin, who found it so

hard to believe I was the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, faithful guests of my father's even in his last abode. But my father did not lie in his shroud for long: he was thrown out of it, when the France of old was thrown on the dung-heap.

In my mother's death certificate, the globe turns on another axis; a new world, a new era; the computation of the years and even the names of the months have altered. Madame de Chateaubriand is merely a poor woman who dies in the house of Citizeness Gouyon; a gardener, and a day-labourer who cannot sign his name, are the sole witnesses to my mother's death: no relatives or friends; no funeral ceremony; the only bystander, the Revolution. (My nephew according to the Breton manner, Frédéric de Chateaubriand, son of my cousin Armand, bought La Ballue, where my mother died.)

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 6

Regrets – Would my father have appreciated me?

Berlin, March 1821.

I mourned Monsieur de Chateaubriand: his death showed me his worth more clearly; I remembered neither his severities nor his weaknesses. I seemed to see him still, walking of an evening in the Great Hall of Combourg; I was moved by thoughts of those family scenes. If my father's affection for me suffered from the rigidity of his character, it was none the less deep. The fierce Marshal de Montluc, who, rendered nose-less by dreadful wounds, was reduced to hiding the horror of his glory under a piece of shroud, that man of bloodshed, reproached himself for his harshness towards a son he had lost.

‘That poor lad,’ he said, ‘never saw anything of me but a grim and scornful countenance; he has died in the belief that I could neither love him nor estimate him at his proper worth. For whom was I saving the singular affection I felt for him in my soul? Was it not he who should have had all the pleasure and the obligation? I was constrained and tormented to wear that false mask, and thereby lost the pleasure of his conversation, and his affection, also, since he cannot have felt anything but cool towards me, having never received anything from me but harshness, nor experienced anything but a tyrannical manner.’

My affection was never cool towards my father, and I have no doubt that, despite his tyrannical manner, he loved me tenderly: he would have grieved for me, I am sure, if Providence had called me, before him. But if we had remained on earth together, would he have appreciated the noise my life has made? A literary reputation would have wounded his sense of nobility; he would have seen nothing in his son's gifts but degeneration; even the Berlin embassy, won by the pen, and not the sword, would have satisfied him little. His Breton blood, moreover, made him a political malcontent, a great opponent of taxation and a violent enemy of the Court. He read the *Gazette de Leyde*, the *Journal de Francfort*, the *Mercure de France*, and the *Histoire philosophique des deux Indes*, whose declamatory style delighted him: he called the Abbé Raynal a master-mind. In diplomatic matters he was anti-Muslim; he declared that forty thousand Russian rascals would march over the Janissaries' bellies and take Constantinople. Yet Turkaphobe though he was, my father none the less bore a grudge against the Russian rascals because of his encounters with them at Danzig.

I share Monsieur de Chateaubriand's sentiments concerning literary and other reputations, but for different reasons to his. I don't know in history of a fame that tempts me: if I had to stoop to pick up at my feet and to my profit the greatest glory in the world, I would not weary myself doing so. If I had molded my own clay, perhaps I would have created myself as a woman, for love of them; or if I had created myself as a man, I would have endowed myself with beauty above all; then, as a precaution against *ennui*, my relentless enemy, it would have suited me to be a great artist, but an unknown one, only employing my talent for the benefit of my solitude. In life, weighed by its light weight, measured by its short measure, stripped of all deception, there are only two true things: religion coupled with intelligence, love coupled with youth, that is to say the future and the present: the rest is not worth the trouble.

With my father's death, the first act of my life ended: the paternal halls became empty; I pitied them, as if they were capable of feeling solitude and abandonment. Henceforth I was independent and master of my

fortune: the freedom scared me. What should I do with it? To whom should I give it? I mistrusted my powers; I shrank from myself.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 7

Return to Brittany – A stay with my eldest sister – My brother summons me to Paris

Berlin, March 1821.

I was given a furlough. Monsieur d'Andrezel, appointed Lieutenant-Colonel of the Picardy Regiment, was leaving Cambrai: I acted as his courier. I passed through Paris, where I did not wish to stop for even a quarter of an hour; I saw the moors of my Brittany again with more joy than a Neapolitan banished to our climes would look once more on the shores of Portici, the fields of Sorrento. My family gathered at Combourg; we divided the inheritance; that done we dispersed like birds leaving the paternal nest. My brother, who had arrived from Paris, returned; my mother settled at Saint-Malo; Lucile went with Julie; I spent part of my time with Mesdames de Marigny, de Chateaubourg, and de Farcy.

Marigny, my eldest sister's chateau, seven miles from Fougères, is pleasantly situated between two lakes among woodland, rocks and meadows. I lived there tranquilly for a few months; a letter from Paris arrived to trouble my peace.

On the point of entering the service, and marrying Mademoiselle de Rosanbo, my brother had not yet abandoned the magistrate's long robe; for this reason he was not entitled to ride in the royal coaches. His relentless ambition urged on him the idea of obtaining for me the enjoyment of Court honors, in order to prepare the way more readily for his own elevation. Our proofs of nobility had been drafted for Lucile, when she was admitted to the Chapter of L'Argentière; so that all was prepared: the Marshal de Duras would act as my sponsor. My brother wrote to tell me I was on the road to fortune; that I had already been granted the rank of cavalry captain, an honorary, courtesy ranking; that it would be an easy matter next to have me admitted to the Order of Malta, by means of which I would enjoy rich benefices.

This letter struck me like a thunderbolt: to return to Paris, to be presented at Court – and I someone disturbed to the point of illness when I met two or three unknown people in a drawing-room! To fill me with ambition, I who only dreamed of living in obscurity!

My first instinct was to reply to my brother that being the eldest it was for him to uphold his name; that, as for me, an obscure Breton younger son, I would not resign from the service, because there was a possibility of war; but that if the king needed a soldier for his army, he did not need a poor gentleman at his Court.

I lost no time in reading this romantic reply to Madame de Marigny, who uttered piercing cries; Madame de Farcy was sent for, who mocked me; Lucile would have genuinely supported me, but she dare not oppose her sisters. They snatched my letter away, and weak as always where I am concerned, I wrote to my brother that I was ready to go.

And so I went; I went to be presented at the first Court of Europe, to commence life in the most brilliant manner, and I had the air of a man being dragged to the galleys, or on whom a sentence of death is about to be pronounced.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 8

#### My solitary life in Paris

Berlin, March 1821.

I entered Paris by the same route I had followed the first time; I went to the same hotel, in the Rue du Mail: it was the only one I knew. I was lodged near my old room, but in a slightly larger apartment overlooking the street.

My brother, either because he was embarrassed by my manners, or because he took pity on my shyness, did not take me into society and did not force me to make anyone's acquaintance. He lived in the Rue des Fossés-Montmartre; I would go there to dine with him every day at three o'clock; we parted afterwards and did not meet again until the next day. My fat cousin Moreau was no longer in Paris. I walked past Madame de Chastenay's house two or three times, without daring to ask the porter what had become of her.

Autumn commenced. I rose at six; I went to the riding-school; I breakfasted. Fortunately I had a passion for Greek at that time: I translated the *Odyssey* and the *Cyropaedia* until two, interspersing my labors with historical studies. At two I dressed and went to my brother's; he would ask me what I had been doing; I replied: 'Nothing.' He shrugged his shoulders and turned his back on me.

One day there was a noise outside, my brother ran to the window, and called me over: I refused to quit the armchair in which I was sprawling at the back of the room. My poor brother prophesied that I would die unknown, useless to myself or my family.

At four, I returned to the hotel: I sat at my casement. Two young girls of fifteen or sixteen would come and sketch at that hour at the window of a house opposite, across the street. They had noticed my punctuality, as I had theirs. From time to time they raised their heads to look at their neighbor: they were my only company in Paris.

At nightfall I went to some play or other: the desert of the crowd pleased me, though it always cost me a little effort to buy my ticket at the door and mix with mankind. I revised my idea of the theatre formed in Saint-Malo. I saw *Madame Saint-Huberty* in the role of *Armida*, I felt there had been something lacking in the sorceress of my imagination. When I failed to imprison myself in the Opera House or the Français, I would wander from street to street or along the embankments until ten or twelve at night. I cannot see the row of streetlamps from the Place Louis XV to the Barrière des Bons-Hommes, to this day, without remembering the agonies I went through as I took that route to reach Versailles for my presentation.

Returning to my lodgings, I spent part of the night with my face turned to the fire, which spoke not a word to me: I had not, as the Persians have, a rich enough imagination to liken the flame to an anemone, and its embers to a pomegranate. I heard the carriages coming and going and passing each other; their distant rumble was like the murmur of the sea on my Breton shores, or the wind in my woods at Combourg. These worldly noises which recalled those of solitude woke my regrets; I called to mind my old malady, whereby my imagination easily invented the tale of those whom the vehicles carried: I saw

radiant salons, balls, love-affairs, conquests. Soon, falling back upon myself, I found myself once more abandoned to a hotel, gazing at the world through the window, and hearing it in the echoes of my abode.

Rousseau thinks he owes to his sincerity, as to the education of mankind, the confession of his life's dubious pleasures; he even supposes that he is being interrogated gravely and asked for an account of his sins with dangerous women, the *donne pericolanti*, of Venice. If I had whored among the Parisian courtesans, I would not have felt obliged to tell posterity about it: but I was too shy on the one hand, too exalted on the other, to allow myself to be seduced by prostitutes. When I met a crowd of those wretched women accosting passers-by in order to drag them upstairs, as Saint-Cloud cabmen try to entice travelers into their cabs, I was seized by horror and disgust. The pleasures of adventure would not have suited me as in times past.

In the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an imperfect civilization, superstitious beliefs, alien and semi-barbarous customs, are met with everywhere in story: the characters are noble, imagination powerful, existence secret and mysterious. At night, round the high walls of cemeteries and convents, beneath the deserted town ramparts, in the channels and ditches of the market-places, at the edges of fenced areas, in the narrow noiseless streets, where thieves and assassins set up ambushes, where meetings took place now by the light of torches, now among dense shadows, one sought out the rendezvous appointed by some Héloïse at peril of one's life. To give oneself over to disorder, it is necessary to truly love: to violate the common morality, it is necessary to make great sacrifices. It is not merely a question of confronting chance perils, and braving the blade of the law, but one is required to conquer in oneself the influence of customary habit, family authority; the tyranny of domestic custom, the opposition of one's conscience, the terrors and obligations of a Christian. All these obstacles increase the energy of the passions.

In 1788 I would not have followed a starving wretch who tried to drag me into her hovel under the watching eye of the police; while in 1606 I would probably have pursued to the end such an adventure as Bassompierre tells so well.

'For five or six months,' the Marshal writes, 'every time I crossed the Petit-Point (since at that time the Pont-Neuf had not yet been built) a lovely woman, a laundry girl at the sign of the Two Angels, made me a deep curtsy and followed me with her eyes as long as she could; and as I was wary of her actions, I glanced at her too and saluted her with care.

It so happened that whenever I arrived in Paris from Fontainebleau, crossing the Petit-Pont, as soon as she saw me coming, she would stand in the entrance to her shop, and say, as I passed: "Monsieur, I am your servant." I returned her greeting, and glancing back from time to time, I saw that she followed me with her eyes as long as she could.' Bassompierre obtained an assignation: 'I found there,' he says, 'a very lovely girl, of twenty years of age, her hair arranged for bed, clothed in nothing but a very thin chemise and a little skirt of green material, slippers on her feet, and her robe round her. She pleased me greatly. I asked her if I might see her again. "If you wish to see me again," she said, "it shall be at my aunt's house, she lives in the Rue Bourg-l'Abbé, close to Les Halles, near to the Rue aux Ours, behind the third door towards the Rue Saint-Martin; I will wait for you there from six till midnight, or even later; I will leave the door unlocked. At the entrance there is a little path you must pass quickly, since my aunt's room leads off it, and you will find a stair that will take you to the second floor." I arrived at ten, and found the door she had signified to me, with a bright light shining, not only on the second floor, but the third and first



too; but the door was locked. I knocked to warn her of my arrival; but I heard a man's voice demanding who I was. I had returned to the Rue aux Ours, and was returning a second time, when I found the door open, and climbed to the second floor, where I found that the light came from a bed of straw that had been set alight, and that there were two naked bodies laid out on a table in the room. Then I retired, completely dumbfounded, and in leaving encountered the crows (buriers of the dead) who asked me what I wanted; I, to push them aside, took my sword in hand, and ignoring them, returned to my lodgings, somewhat disturbed by the unexpected sight.'

I went in turn to find the address Bassompierre had given, two hundred and forty years later. I crossed the Petit-Pont, traversed Les Halles, and followed the Rue Saint-Denis to the Rue aux Ours on the right; the first street on the left after the Rue aux Ours is the Rue Bourg-l'Abbé. Its sign, blackened as if by time and flames, inspired me with hope. I found the third little door towards the Rue Saint Martin, to that extent the historian's information was correct. There, unfortunately, the two and a half centuries that I thought still cloaked the street, vanished. The façade of the house was modern; no light shone from the first, second or third floor. In the attic windows, under the roof, a tangle of nasturtiums and sweet-peas flowered: on the ground floor a hairdresser's salon offered a host of wigs, displayed behind the glass.

Disappointed, I entered this Museum of Éponine: since the Roman conquest, the Gauls have always sold their blonde tresses to those with less favored heads: my Breton compatriots still cut their hair on certain feast days, and barter their natural covering for an Indian handkerchief. Addressing myself to the hairdresser, who was drawing a wig over an iron comb: 'Monsieur, have you purchased the hair of a young laundry-girl, who lives at the sign of the Two Angels, near the Petit-Pont?' He stooped, amazed, unable to say yes or no. I retired, with a thousand apologies, through a labyrinth of toupees.

I wandered afterwards from door to door; no twenty-year old washerwoman made me a deep curtsy; no young girl, candid, selfless, passionate, her hair arranged for bed, clothed in nothing but a very thin chemise and a little skirt of green material, slippers on her feet, and her robe round her. A grumpy old woman, ready to rejoin her teeth in the tomb, decided to beat me with her crutch: perhaps it was the aunt of that rendezvous.

What a lovely story that story of Bassompierre's! It helps if one understands one of the reasons why he was loved so resolutely. At that time, the French were still divided into two distinct classes, one dominant, the other subservient. The laundry-girl clasped Bassompierre in her arms, as if he were a demi-god descending to the breast of a slave: he gave her the illusion of glory, and French girls, along among women, are capable of being intoxicated by that illusion.

But who can reveal the unknown cause of the catastrophe to us? Was it that kind little working class girl of the Two Angels whose body lay on the table with some other? Whose was the other corpse? Her husband's or the man whose voice Bassompierre heard? Did plague (since there was plague in Paris) or jealousy rush down the Rue Bourg-l'Abbé ahead of love? The imagination easily exercises itself over such a subject. Mingle with the inventions of the poet of popular opera, the gravediggers arrival, the crows meeting Bassompierre's sword, and a superb melodrama would be produced from the affair.

You may admire too the chastity and self-restraint of my youthful days in Paris: in that capital, it would have been permissible for me to have surrendered myself to my every whim, as in the Abbey of Thélème, where everyone did as he wished; nevertheless I did not abuse my independence: I only had commerce

with a two hundred and sixteen year old courtesan, loved long ago by a Marshal of France, the rival of the Béarnais in the matter of Mademoiselle de Montmorency, and lover of Mademoiselle d'Entragues, sister of the Marquise de Verneuil, who spoke so ill of Henri IV. Louis XVI, who I was going to meet, would not have suspected my secret connection with his family.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 9

#### Presentation at Versailles – Hunting with the King

Berlin, March 1821.

The dreaded day arrived; I was forced to set out for Versailles, more dead than alive. My brother took me there the day before my presentation and introduced me to Marshal de Duras, a worthy gentleman with a mind so ordinary that it cast something of the commonplace over his fine manners: nevertheless this good Marshal scared me terribly.

Next morning, I went alone to the palace. One has seen nothing, if one has not seen the pomp of Versailles, even after the disbanding of the old royal household: Louis XIV was still there.

Things went well so long as I only had to pass through the guardrooms: military display has always pleased me and never overawed me. But when I entered the Oeil-de-Boeuf, the ante-chamber to the Great Hall, and found myself among the courtiers, my agony began. They gazed at me; I heard them ask who I was. One must remember the ancient prestige of royalty, to realize the importance of a presentation in those days. A mysterious sense of destiny clung to the debutant; he was spared the patronizing contempt, coupled with extreme politeness, which made up the inimitable manners of the grandee. Who could tell whether this debutant might not become the master's favorite. One respected in him the future familiarity with which he might be honored. Today we rush to the palace with even more enthusiasm than before, and curiously, without illusions: a courtier reduced to living on truths is not far from death by hunger.

When the King's levee was announced, those who had not been presented withdrew; I felt a moment of vanity: I was not proud of remaining, but would have felt humiliated at having to leave. The door of the King's bed-chamber opened: I saw the King, in accord with custom, complete his toilette that is to say he took his hat from the hands of the first gentleman in waiting. The King passed on his way to Mass; I bowed, Marshal de Duras presented me: 'Sire, the Chevalier de Chateaubriand.' The King looked at me, returned my bow, hesitated, and appeared as if he wished to stop and say a word to me. I would have replied with a calm countenance: my shyness had vanished. To speak to the commander of the Army, the Head of State seemed simple enough to me, without my being able to explain why. The King more embarrassed than I was, finding nothing to say to me, passed on. The vanity of human destiny! This sovereign whom I saw for the first time, this monarch so powerful was Louis XVI six years from the scaffold! And this new courtier at whom he scarcely glanced, having been presented on proof of nobility to the grandeur of Saint Louis' heir, would one day, charged with separating remains from remains, be presented on proof of fidelity to his dust! A twofold mark of respect to the twofold royalty of the scepter and the palm! Louis XVI might have answered his judges as Christ did the Jews: 'Many good works I have showed you'... 'for which of those works do you stone me?'

We hurried to the gallery to see the Queen pass on her return from the chapel. She soon appeared with a glittering and crowded retinue; she made us a stately curtsy; she seemed enchanted with life. And those lovely hands which bore then the scepter of so many kings with so much grace, were destined, before being bound by the executioner, to mend the rags of the widow imprisoned in the Conciergerie!

Though my brother had obtained a concession from me, it was not in his power to make me pursue it further. He begged me in vain to remain at Versailles in order to attend the Queen's card-play in the evening: 'You will be presented to the Queen,' he told me, 'and the King will speak to you.' He could not have given me a better reason for flight. I hastened to go and hide my glory in my furnished room, happy to have escaped the Court, but seeing before me, still to come, the terrible day of the carriages, the 19th February 1787.

The Duc de Coigny informed me that I was to hunt with the King in the forest of Saint-Germain. Early in the morning I headed for my torment, dressed as a debutant in a grey coat, red jacket and breeches, lace-topped riding boots, a hunting knife at my side, and a little gold-laced French hat. There were four of us debutants at the Palace of Versailles, myself; the two Messieurs de Saint-Marsault, and the Comte d'Hautefeuille. (I have met Monsieur the Comte d'Hautefeuille again: he is translating a number of pieces by Byron; Madame the Comtesse d'Hautefeuille is the talented author of *l'Âme exilée* etc.) The Duc de Coigny gave us our instructions: he advised us not to interfere with the hunt as the King was angered if anyone came between him and the quarry. The Duc de Coigny bore a name fatal to the Queen. The meet was at Le Val in the forest of Saint-Germain, an estate leased by the crown from Marshal de Beauvau. Custom decreed that the horses of a first hunt in which debutants took part were provided by the royal stables. (The Gazette de France for Tuesday 27th February 1787 reads as follows: 'Comte Charles d'Hautefeuille, the Baron de Saint-Marsault, the Baron de Saint-Marsault-Chatellaillon, and the Chevalier de Chateaubriand who had previously had the honor of being presented to the King, have received on the 19th, that of riding in his Majesty's carriages, and following the chase.')

The guard beat the salute: at the voice of command, they presented arms. There was a shout of: 'The King!' The King appeared, and entered his carriage: we rode in the carriages behind. It was a far cry from this expedition and hunt with the King of France, to my hunting trips on the Breton moors, and an even further cry to my hunting trips with the savages of America: my life would be full of these contrasts.

We reached the rallying-point, where a number of saddle horses, held in hand under the trees, showed their impatience. The carriages with their guards drawn up in the forest; the groups of men and women; the packs barely restrained by the huntsmen; the hounds barking, horses neighing, the sound of the horns, made a very lively picture. The hunts of our kings recalled both the ancient and new customs of the monarchy, the rough pastimes of Clodion, Chilpéric, and Dagobert, the elegant enjoyments of François I, Henri IV, and Louis XIV.

I was too full of my reading not see everywhere Comtesses de Chateaubriand, Duchesses d'Etampes, Gabrielles d'Estrées, La Vallières, and Montespan. My imagination seized on the historic aspect of this hunt, and I felt at ease; besides I was in a forest, I was at home.

Descending from the carriage, I gave my ticket to the huntsman. A mare called L'Heureuse had been chosen for me, a swift creature, but hard-mouthed, skittish and capricious; a fair enough likeness of my fate, which never ceases to set back its ears. The King having mounted departed; the hunt followed, taking different routes. I was left behind, struggling with L'Heureuse who would not let her new master straddle her; however, in the end, I did manage to leap on her back: the hunt was already far off.

At first I mastered L'Heureuse well enough; forced to shorten her pace, she bowed her neck, shook her bit white with foam, and bounded along sideways; but once she neared the scene of the action, there was no

holding her. She stretched out her head, forcing my hand down to her neck, and galloped straight into a knot of hunters, sweeping aside all in her way, and stopping only when she collided with the mount of a woman whom she almost knocked to the ground, in the midst of shouts of laughter from some, cries of fear from others. I have tried in vain today to remember the name of the woman, who accepted my apology politely. Nothing else was spoken of but the debutant's adventure.

I had not reached the end of my trials. About half an hour after my mishap, I was riding across a lengthy clearing in a deserted part of the woods: there was a summerhouse at the end: there I began to think about these palaces scattered about the Crown forests, in memory of the long-haired kings and their mysterious pleasures: a shot rang out; L'Heureuse veered sharply, plunged head first into a thicket, and carried me to the very spot where the roe-buck had just been killed: the King appeared.

Then I remembered, too late, the Duc de Coigny's warning: the wretched *Heureuse* had done for me. I leapt to the ground, pushing my mare back with one hand and sweeping my hat off with the other. The king stared; he felt he should speak; instead of being angered, he said in a good-natured tone, and with a loud laugh: 'He did not hold out long.' That was the only word I ever had from Louis XVI. People arrived on every side; they were amazed to find me talking with the King. The debutant Chateaubriand made a noise with his two adventures; but as has always happened since, he did not know how to profit from his good or bad luck.

The King brought three other roe-bucks to bay. Debutants were only allowed to pursue the first animal, so I went back to Le Val to wait with my companions for the hunt to return.

The King rode back to Le Val; he was cheerful and talked of the incidents during the chase. We took the road for Versailles. There was a fresh disappointment for my brother: instead of going off to dress, in order to attend the un-booting, a moment of triumph and favor, I threw myself into my carriage, and returned to Paris, full of joy at being delivered from my honors and tribulations. I told my brother I was determined to return to Brittany.

Content with having made his name known, and hoping one day to bring to maturity by means of his own presentation what had proved abortive in mine, he did not oppose the departure of so eccentric a brother. (The *Mémorial historique de la Noblesse* has published an unedited document annotated in the King's hand, taken from the Royal archives, section historique, register M813, and box M814; it contains the attendees. My name and that of my brother are found there, proving that my memory has served me well concerning the dates: Note, Paris 1840).

Such was my first view of Town and Court. Society seemed even more odious than I had imagined; but though it scared me it did not discourage me; I felt, confusedly, that I was superior to what I had seen. I took an unconquerable dislike to the Court; this dislike, or rather contempt, which I have been unable to hide, will prevent my succeeding, or bring about my fall at the very summit of my career.

As for the rest, if I judged the world without knowing it, the world, in its turn, ignored me. No one imagined on my debut what I might achieve, and no one was any the wiser when I returned to Paris. Since attaining my melancholy fame, many people have said: 'How readily we would have noticed you, if we had met you in your youth!' This kind pretension is no more than an illusion produced by an existing reputation. Men are alike on the outside: it is idle for Rousseau to tell us that he possessed a pair of small

but very attractive eyes: it is no less certain witness his portraits that he looked like a schoolmaster or a crotchety cobbler.

To have done with the Court, I should say that having revisited Brittany, and returned once more to live in Paris with my younger sisters, Lucile and Julie, I plunged more deeply than ever into my solitary habits. I have been asked what came of this history of my presentation. It stopped there. – ‘You never hunted with the King again, then?’ – ‘No more than with the Emperor of China.’ – ‘You never returned to Versailles?’ – ‘I twice went as far as Sèvres; courage failed me, and I returned to Paris.’ – So you had no profit from your position?’ – ‘None at all.’ – ‘What did you do then?’ – ‘I got bored.’ – ‘So you felt no ambition?’ – ‘Indeed: by dint of worry and intrigue, I achieved the glory of publishing an idyll in the *Almanach des Muses* whose appearance nearly killed me with hope and fear. I would have given all the King’s carriages to have written the ballad: *O ma tendre musette!* (Oh my gentle air!), or *De mon berger volage* (My faithless shepherd)’

Good for anything on others behalf, good for nothing where I am concerned: there you have me.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 10

Trip to Brittany – Garrison in Dieppe – Return to Paris with Lucile and Julie

Berlin, March 1821.

All that has been written so far of this fourth book was written in Berlin. I have returned to Paris for the baptism of the Duc de Bordeaux, and I have resigned my embassy out of political loyalty to Monsieur de Villèle who has left the Ministry. My freedom restored, let me write. The more these Memoirs are filled with the passing years, the more they remind me of the lower bubble of a sand-glass showing how many grains of my life have fallen: when all the sand has passed through, I would not turn over my timepiece of glass, even if God gave me the power to do so.

The new solitude I entered into, in Brittany, after my presentation, was no longer that of Combourg; it was neither as total, nor as profound, nor to tell the truth, as mandatory: I was free to leave; it lost some of its value. An old escutcheoned lady, an old emblazoned baron watching over the last of their sons and daughters in a feudal manor, represented what the English call characters: there was nothing provincial or limited about that life, because it was not an ordinary life.

At my sisters' homes, the province gathered in the midst of the fields: neighbors danced at neighbors' houses, or put on plays in which I occasionally acted badly. In winter one suffered the small town society of Fougères, with its balls, assemblies, and dinners, and I could not live forgotten, as in Paris.

On the other hand, I had not viewed the Army and the Court without a change taking place in my ideas: in spite of my natural inclinations, something in me, rebelling against obscurity, urged me to quit the shadows. Julie detested the provinces: while the instinct of genius and beauty impelled Lucile towards a wider stage.

Thus I experienced a feeling of dissatisfaction with my existence which informed me that this existence was not my destiny.

Nevertheless, I still loved the country, and that around Marigny was delightful. (Marigny has changed greatly since the time when my sister lived there. It was sold, and now belongs to the Pommereuls, who have rebuilt and embellished it, significantly.) My regiment had changed quarters: the first battalion was stationed at Le Havre, the second at Dieppe: I rejoined the latter: my presentation made me a personage. I acquired a taste for my profession; I worked at drill; I was put in charge of raw recruits whom I exercised on the pebbly beach: that sea has formed the background to almost all the scenes of my life.

La Martinière occupied himself at Dieppe, with neither his namesake Lamartinière, nor with Le Père Simon, who wrote opposing Bossuet, Port-Royal and the Benedictines, nor with the anatomist Pecquet, whom Madame de Sévigné called Little Pecquet; but La Martinière was in love in Dieppe as in Cambrai: he languished at the feet of a formidable lady of Normandy, whose headdress and coiffure were three feet high. She was not young: by a singular coincidence she was named Cauchie, apparently a grand-daughter of that Anne Cauchie of Dieppe, who in 1645 was a hundred and fifty years old!

[Editorial Note: In his *History of Dieppe*, Ludovic Vitet records Anne Cauchie's age in 1645 as 105.]

It was in 1647 that Anne of Austria, looking as I did at the sea through the window of her room, enjoyed watching fire-ships consumed for her diversion. She allowed the people who had remained faithful to Henri IV to guard the young Louis XIV; she blessed them endlessly, despite their vile Norman language.

One found again at Dieppe certain feudal taxes that I had seen levied at Combourg: to a gentleman named Vauquelin were due three pig's heads each with an orange in its mouth, and three sous stamped from the oldest known coinage.

I returned to Fougères on six months' leave. There, a noble spinster reigned, named Mademoiselle de La Belinaye, the aunt of that Comtesse de Trojolif, of whom I have spoken. A pleasant but ugly sister of an officer in the Condé Regiment attracted my attention: I would not have been bold enough to raise my eyes to beauty; it was only in the presence of a woman's imperfections that I dared to venture a respectful homage.

Madame de Farcy, always ailing, finally resolved to leave Brittany. She persuaded Lucile to accompany her; Lucile in turn overcame my reluctance: we took the road to Paris; a sweet association of the three youngest fledglings from the nest.

My brother had married: he was living at the house of his father-in-law, Président de Rosanbo, in the Rue de Bondi. We arranged to settle in the neighborhood: through the good offices of Monsieur Delisle de Sales, living in the Saint-Lazare villas at the top of the Faubourg Saint-Denis, we secured an apartment in these same villas.



## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 11

Delisle de Sales – Flins – Life of a man of letters

Paris, June 1821.

Madame de Farcy was acquainted, I know not how, with Delisle de Sales, who had once been imprisoned at Vincennes for philosophical inanities. At that time, one became an important celebrity when one had scrawled a few lines of prose or inserted a quatrain in the *Almanach des Muses*. Delisle de Sales, a man of extreme kindness, a cordial mediocrity, had great mental flexibility, and let the years roll by him; this old man had employed his works to collect a fine library which he leant out to strangers and which no one in Paris read. Each year, in spring, he replenished his ideas in Germany. Fat and slovenly, he carried about a roll of filthy paper which one saw him drag from his pocket; on street corners, he consigned to it his thought of the moment. On the pedestal of his marble bust, he had traced this inscription with his own hand, borrowed from Buffon's bust: *God, Man, Nature, he explained them completely*. Delisle de Sales explained completely! Those proud words are quite amusing, but quite disheartening. Who can flatter himself he has true talent? Might it not be that, as long as we live, we are all under the power of an illusion like that of Delisle de Sales? I would wager that whichever author penned that phrase thought himself a writer of genius, and yet was no better than a fool.

If I have spent too much time on my account of this worthy man of the Saint-Lazare villas, it is because he was the first literary man I met: he introduced me to the society of others.

The presence of my two sisters rendered my stay in Paris less intolerable; my affinity for study further weakened my distaste. Delisle de Sales seemed an eagle to me. I met Carbon Flins des Oliviers at his house, who fell in love with Madame de Farcy. She teased him; he took it well, since he had pretensions to being good company. Through Flins I met Fontanes, his friends, who became mine also.

Son of a head keeper of lakes and forests at Rheims, Flins education had been severely neglected; for all that he was a man of wit and occasionally talent. No one fatter could be imagined: short and corpulent, with large protruding eyes, tousled hair, blackened teeth, and despite all that a not ignoble air. His mode of life, which was that of almost all the men of letters of Paris at that time, is worth recounting.

Flins lived in an apartment on the Rue Mazarine, quite near La Harpe, who lived in the Rue Guénégaud. Two Savoyards, dressed as lackeys by virtue of their silk livery, served him: in the evenings they followed him about, and they introduced visitors to his house in the mornings. Regularly Flins attended the Théâtre-Français, then in the Place à l'Odéon, and excellent above all for comedy. Brizard was nearing the end of his career; Talma was commencing his, Larive, Saint-Phal, Fleury, Molé, Dazincourt, Dugazon, Grandmesnil, Mesdames Contat, Saint-Val, Desgarcins, Olivier, were at the height of their powers, in the wings was Mademoiselle Mars, daughter of Monvel, ready to make her debut at the Théâtre Montansier. Actresses gave their patronage to authors and sometimes made their fortune for them.

Flins, whose allowance from his family was only modest, lived on credit. When Parliament was not sitting, he pawned his Savoyards' liveries, his two watches, his rings and his linen, paid what he must

with the loan, and left for Rheims, stayed there for three months, returned to Paris, redeemed, with the money his father had given him, what he had deposited at the Mont-de-Piété, and recommenced the circle of his life, always cheerful and received everywhere.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 12

#### Men of letters – Portraits

Paris, June 1821.

During the two years which passed between establishing myself in Paris and the opening of the States-General this social network widened. I knew by heart the elegies of the Chevalier du Parny, and I even knew the author. I wrote to him to ask permission to meet a poet whose works delighted me; he replied politely: I went to his house in the Rue de Cléry.

I found quite a young man, dressed in very good taste, tall, thin, his face marked by smallpox. He returned my visit; I presented him to my sisters. He had little liking for society and he was soon driven from it by his politics: he was then of the 'old' party. I have never met a writer who conformed more closely to his work; a poet and a Creole, he only lacked the skies of India, a fountain, a palm-tree and a wife. He dreaded fame, sought to glide through life without being noticed, sacrificed everything to his idleness, and was only dragged from his obscurity by his pleasures which stroked the lyre in passing:

*'Let our life so fortunate and happy  
Flow in secret 'neath the wings of love,  
Akin to a barely murmuring stream*

*Constraining its waves within its bed,  
That softly seeks the leaves' shade overhead,  
And dare not show itself to all the scene.'*

It was the impossibility of escaping from his indolence that turned the Chevalier de Parny from furious aristocrat to wretched revolutionary, attacking persecuted religion and priests on the scaffold, purchasing his peace at any price, and lending to the Muse that sang of *Eléonore* the language of those places where Camille Desmoulins went to bargain for love.

The author of the *Histoire de la littérature italienne*, who wormed his way into the Revolution as a follower of Chamfort, met us through that cousinship that all Bretons share. Guinguéné existed in the world on the reputation of a graceful enough piece of verse that was worth a minor appointment in Monsieur de Necker's office to him; from there the piece assured his entry into the Office of Public Finance. I do not know who disputed with Guinguéné his famous title, the *Confession de Zulmé*; but in effect it belonged to him.

The poet from Rennes was familiar with music and composed ballades. Humble as he was, we saw his pride grow, as he clung to someone well-known. Close to the time when the States-General were convened, Chamfort employed him to scribble articles for the journals, and speeches for the clubs; he became haughty. At the first Festival of the Federation he said: 'What a lovely celebration! To shed more light we should burn four aristocrats at the four corners of the altar.' He lacked originality in his wish; long before him, the Leaguer, Louis D'Orléans, wrote in his *Banquet du comte d'Arête*: 'that we must tie

protestant ministers like faggots to the branches of the bonfire of Saint-Jean, and put Henry IV in the barrel where they put the cats.'

Ginguené had prior knowledge of the revolutionary atrocities. Madame Ginguené warned my sisters and my wife of the massacre which would take place at les Carmes, and gave them refuge: they were living in the Cul-de-sac Férou, near the place where throats were cut.

After the Terror, Ginguené became virtually the controller of public education; it was then that he sang *l'Arbre de la liberté* (The Tree of Liberty) to the crowd in the Cadran-Bleu restaurant, to the tune of; '*Je l'ai planté, je l'ai vu naître*' (I planted it, I have seen its birth.) One judges him to have admired philosophy too much to be an ambassador to one of those kings they deposed. He wrote from Turin to Monsieur Talleyrand that he had vanquished a prejudice: he had had his wife received at court in a short skirt. Tumbling from mediocrity into importance, from importance into foolishness, and from foolishness into ridicule, he ended his literary life as a noted critic, and, what is better still, an independent writer for the *Décade*: nature had returned him to the place from which society had dragged him at just the wrong moment. His knowledge was second-hand, his prose heavy, his poetry correct, and occasionally agreeable.

Ginguené had a friend, the poet Lebrun. Ginguené protected Lebrun, as a man of talent who knows society protects the simplicity of a man of genius; Lebrun in turn shed his rays on Ginguené's heights. Nothing was more comical than the role of those two accomplices, providing, by means of gentile exchange, all the services that two superior individuals might render in diverse genres.

Lebrun was quite simply an artificial Empire man; his wit was as cold as his enthusiasms were frozen. His Parnassus, an upper room in the Rue Montmartre, offered as its only furniture books piled haphazardly on the floor, a bed made of webbing whose curtains, formed from two dirty sheets, flapped across a rail of rusty iron, and half a water jug resting against an armchair without stuffing. It was not that Lebrun was financially embarrassed, but he was miserly and devoted to loose-living women.

At Monsieur de Vaudreuil's classical suppers, he played the role of Pindar. Among his lyric poems, one finds vigorous and elegant verses, as in the ode on the ship *Le Vengeur* and his ode on *Les Environs de Paris*. His elegies emerged from his brain, rarely from his soul; he had a studied rather than a natural originality; he only created by virtue of artistic strength; he exercised himself in perverting the sense of words and combining them in monstrous alliances. Lebrun's only true talent was for satire; his epistle on *La bonne et la mauvaise plaisanterie* has enjoyed well-merited renown. Some of his epigrams are worthy of comparing with those of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau; Laharpe influenced him particularly. One must also do him the justice to say that he remained independent during Bonaparte's time, and there are some blood-stained verses of his, written in opposition to that oppressor of our freedoms.

But, without question, the testiest man of letters I met in Paris at that time was Chamfort; suffering from that malady that created the Jacobins, he could not forgive mankind for the misfortune of his origins. He betrayed the trust of the houses to which he was admitted; he took the cynicism of his own language for a portrait of Court morals. One could not quarrel with his being a man of wit and talent, but of that kind of wit and talent that has no impact on posterity. When he realized he was achieving nothing during the Revolution, he turned against himself those hands which he had raised against society. The red cap appeared to his pride to be another sort of crown, sans-culottisma sort of nobility, of which Marat and

Robespierre were great lords. Furious at finding inequality of rank even in a world of grief and tears, condemned to being no more than a serf among feudal tormentors, he wished to kill in order to escape from criminal oppression; he bungled his suicide; death mocks those who summon it and who confuse it with nothingness.

I did not meet l'Abbé Delille except in London in 1798, and have not seen Rulhière, who existed thanks to Madame d'Egmont, and who in turn gave her existence, nor Palissot, Beaumarchais, or Marmontel. So it is that I have never met Chénier either, who attacked me frequently, to whom I never responded, and to whose place at the Institute I owe one of the crises of my life.

When I re-read the writers of the eighteenth century, I am amazed at the fame they acquired, and at my old enthusiasms. Whether the language has advanced, or retreated, whether we have marched towards civilization, or beat a retreat towards barbarism, what is certain is that I find something worn, faded, dull, inanimate, and cold in the authors that were the delight of my youth. I find in even the greatest writers of the age of Voltaire poverty of sentiment, in thought and style.

Who is to blame for my own lapses? I am fearful of having been the guiltiest party: a born innovator, perhaps I have communicated to new generations the malady with which I was infected. Terrified, I have shouted at my children: 'Do not forget your French!' They reply as the Limousin did to Pantagruel: 'that they come from the *alma*, *inclita*, and celebrated academy that one *vocite Lutetia*.' [the old beauty, and celebrated school, that one shouted 'Paris.']

This mania for Graecizing and Latinizing our language is nothing new, as we see: Rabelais cures it, it reappears in Ronsard; Boileau attacks it. In our time it has been resuscitated by Science; our revolutionaries, noble Greeks by nature, have required our shopkeepers and peasants to understand hectares, hectolitres, kilometres, millimetres, decagrams: politics has been *Ronsardised*.

I might have spoken here of Monsieur de Laharpe, whom I still know and whom I will return to; I might have added to my portrait gallery that of Fontanes; but though my relationship with that excellent man had its birth in 1789, it was only in England that I forged a friendship with him that has grown with bad fortune, and never diminished with good; I will tell you about him later accompanied by all the outpourings of my heart. I can only describe talents that no longer solace the world. My friend's death occurred at a moment when my memories were urging me to retrace the commencement of his life. Our existence flies past so swiftly, that if we do not write in the evening the events of the morning, the effort burdens us and we no longer have time to bring them to light. That does not prevent us wasting our lives, scattering to the winds those hours that for mankind are the seeds of eternity.

## BOOK IV

### CHAPTER 13

The Rosanbo family – Monsieur de Malesherbes: his predilection for Lucile – Appearance and transformation of my Sylph

Paris, June 1821.

If my inclination and that of my sisters had launched me into literary society, our position obliged us to frequent another; the family of my brother's wife was for us, as a matter of course, the center of that latter grouping.

President Le Peletier de Rosanbo, who later died with so much courage, was, when I arrived in Paris, a model of flippancy. At that time, everything was disrupted in mind and morals, a symptom of the approaching Revolution. Magistrates were ashamed to wear their robes, and held up to mockery their fathers' gravity. The Lamoignons, Molés, Séguiers, and d'Aguessaus wished to fight and not to judge. The presidents' wives, ceasing to be respected mothers of families, left their sombre houses to become women involved in glittering affairs. The priest, in his pulpit, avoided the name of Jesus-Christ and only spoke of the Christian Legislature; ministers fell one after another; power slipped from everyone's hands. The height of good taste was to be American in town, English at Court, Prussian in the army; anything, except French. What one did, what one said, was no more than a succession of irrelevancies. One claimed to care for the priests who granted benefices, while wanting nothing to do with religion; no one could be an officer if he was not a gentleman, yet one waxed eloquent against the nobility; equality was demonstrated in the salons and beating with sticks in the camps.

Monsieur de Malesherbes had three daughters, Mesdames de Rosanbo, d'Aulnay and de Montboissier: he loved, by preference, Madame de Rosanbo, because of the resemblance between her opinions and his. President de Rosanbo also had three daughters, Mesdames de Chateaubriand, d'Aulnay, and de Tocqueville, and a son whose brilliant wit is combined with Christian perfection. Monsieur de Malesherbes took pleasure in the company of his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Many a time, in the early days of the Revolution, I saw him arrive at Madame de Rosanbo's, hot from politics, throw off his wig, lie down on the carpet in my sister-in-law's room, and allow himself to be crawled all over by the pack of children, while they made a tremendous din. He would have been a man of rather vulgar manners, if he had not had a certain brusqueness that saved him from the commonplace: at the first words that fell from his lips, one sensed the man of breeding, and the great magistrate. His natural virtues were tinged with affectation, a little, by the philosophy he mingled with them. He was full of knowledge, integrity and courage; but fiery, passionate to the point of saying to me one day while speaking about Condorcet: 'That man was my friend; today I would have no scruples about killing him like a dog.' The tide of the Revolution swept over him, and his death brought him glory. This great man would have been hidden with his merits if an ill fate had not revealed him to the world. A noble Venetian lost his life, while recovering his title deeds in the collapse of an ancient palace.

Monsieur de Malesherbes' frank manner freed me from all constraint. He discovered me to be fairly well-educated; that was our first point of contact: we would discuss botany and geography, his favorite subjects of conversation. It was through speaking with him that I conceived the idea of making a voyage

to North America, to discover the sea that Hearne and later Mackenzie saw (In the last few years, navigated by Captains Franklin and Parry. Note: Geneva, 1831). We were also compatible in our politics: the idealistic sentiments at the heart of the first disorders appealed to the independence of my character; the natural antipathy I felt for the Court added force to this inclination. I was on the side of Monsieur de Malesherbes and Madame de Rosanbo, opposed to Monsieur de Rosanbo and my brother, whom we nicknamed the rabid Chateaubriand. The Revolution would have carried me along with it, if it had not begun criminally: I saw the first head aloft on the end of a pike, and I recoiled. Murder can never be a subject for admiration in my eyes, nor an argument in favor of liberty; I know of nothing more servile, contemptible, cowardly and stupid than a terrorist. Have I not encountered in France the whole race of Brutus in the service of Caesar and his police? The levellers, regenerators, and cut-throats were transformed to valets, spies, sycophants, and still more unnaturally into dukes, counts and barons: how medieval!

Lastly, what attached me even more to the illustrious old man, was his predilection for my sister: despite Comtesse Lucile's shyness, we succeeded with the help of a little champagne, of persuading her to take a role in a little play, on the occasion of Monsieur de Malesherbes birthday; she was so touching that the good and great man's head was turned. He was even more insistent than my brother that she should be translated from the Chapter of L'Argentière to that of Remiremont, which demanded strict and difficult proof of sixteen quarterings. Complete philosopher though he was, Monsieur de Malesherbes possessed the prejudices of nobility to a high degree.

This portrait of men and society at the time of my debut in the wider world must be taken to cover the space of about two years, between the closure of the first Assembly of Notables, on the 25th May 1787, and the opening of the States-General on the 5th May 1789. During those two years, my sisters and I did not live continuously in Paris, or even in the same part of Paris. I will now regress and return my readers to Brittany.

I should add that I was still obsessed by my illusions; though I missed my woods, remote times rather than distant places revealed a different solitude to me. In old Paris, in the precincts of Saint-Germain-des-Près, in the cloisters of monasteries, in the vaults of Saint-Denis, in Notre-Dame, in the narrow streets of the Cité, at Héloïse's humble door, I saw my enchantress again; but she had assumed, beneath the Gothic arches, and among the tombs, something of a deathlike appearance: she was pallid, she looked at me with melancholy eyes; she was only the shadow or the manes of the dream I had loved.

**End of Book IV**

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 1

First political stirrings in Brittany – A glance at the history of the Monarchy

*Paris, September 1821. (Revised December 1846)*

My various residences in Brittany, in the years 1787 and 1788, initiated my political education. The Provincial States presented a model of the States-General: also the specific disturbances that heralded those of the nation broke out in two regions, Brittany and the Dauphiné.

The transformation which had taken place over two centuries came to fulfilment: France having passed from feudal monarchy to the monarchy of the States-General, from the monarchy of the States-General to the monarchy of the parliaments, from the monarchy of the parliaments to absolute monarchy, tended towards representative monarchy, through the struggle between the magistracy and royal authority.

Maupeou's parliament, the establishment of provincial assemblies, with the vote per head, the first and second assemblies of Notables, the plenary Court, the formation of grand bailiwicks, the civil reintegration of the Protestants, the partial abolition of torture, that of days of unpaid labor, and the equal distribution of tax payments, were successive proofs of the revolution which was taking place. But at that time one could not see the trend of events, each occurrence seemed an isolated accident. In all historical periods there is a driving-spirit. Seeing only one point, one cannot see the rays converging to the focus of all other points; one cannot detect the hidden agent which produces the general life and movement, like water or heat in a machine: that is why, at the start of a revolution so many people think it enough to break a wheel in order to prevent the torrent from flowing or the vapor from exploding.

The eighteenth century, the century of intellectual action, not material action, would not have succeeded in changing the laws so swiftly if it had not come across the right vehicle: the parliaments, and in particular the Paris parliament, became the instruments of a philosophical system. All opinion aborts in powerlessness and frenzy, if it is not vested in an assembly that empowers it, gives it a will, furnishes it with a language and arms. It is, and always will be, through bodies, legal or illegal, that revolutions arrive and will arrive.

The parliaments had reason for revenge: absolute monarchy had snatched from them an authority usurped on behalf of the States-General. Forced registrations, *lits de justice* (special sessions of the parliament over which the king presided) and imposed exile, in making the magistrates popular, drove them to demand freedoms of which they were not at heart sincere partisans. They called for the States-General, not daring to admit that they desired legislative and political power for themselves: in that way they hastened the resurrection of a body whose inheritance they had already received, which in renewing its existence, immediately limited them to their own specialty, justice. Men almost always damage their own interests when they are moved by wisdom or passion: Louis XVI restored the parliaments which forced him to call the States-General; the States-General transformed itself into the National Assembly, and then the Convention, destroyed both throne and parliaments, putting to death both the judges and the monarch from whom justice emanated. But Louis XVI and the parliaments acted in that way because they were, without realizing it, the means to engender a social revolution.

The idea of the States-General then was in everyone's mind, only one could not see where it would lead. It was a question, for the masses, of making good a deficit that the lowliest banker today would take it upon himself to eliminate. So violent a remedy, applied to so trivial a problem demonstrated that we had



entered unknown regions politically. For the year 1786, the only year for which the financial accounts are well-attested, receipts were 412,924,000 livres, expenditure was 593,542,000 livres: the deficit was 180, 618,000 livres, reduced to 140 million, by 40 million 610 thousand livres of savings. In that budget, the King's household was reckoned at the immense sum of 37 million 200 thousand livres: the princes' debts, the acquisition of various châteaux and the depredations of the Court were the reasons for that excess.

They wished to revive the States-General as they were in 1614. Historians always cite their form at that time, as if, after 1614, no one had ever heard a word of the States-General, nor asked for them to be summoned. Yet, in 1651, the orders of nobility and clergy, meeting in Paris, called for the States-General. A large collection of the acts passed, and speeches made, at that time, still exists. The Paris parliament, all powerful at that time, far from seconding the wishes of the two senior orders, condemned their assembly as illegal; which was correct.

And whilst I am pursuing this, I wish to note another serious matter that has escaped those who, without knowledge of it, have involved and involve themselves in French history. We speak of the three orders, as essential constituents of the States described as general. Well, it often happened that various bailiwicks only nominated deputies from one or two of the orders. In 1614, the bailiwick of Chateaufort-en-Thimerais sent no representative of the clergy or the third estate; Le Puy, La Rochelle, Le Lauraguais, Calais, La Haute-Marche, Châtellerauld sent no representative of the clergy, nor Montdidier et Roye of the nobility. None the less the States of 1614 were called States-General. Also the ancient chronicles, expressing themselves in the most correct manner, say, in speaking of our national assemblies, the three States, or the notable personages, or the bishops and the barons, as appropriate, and attribute to assemblies so composed the same legislative power. In various provinces, the third estate, though summoned, appointed no delegates, and for a natural but less obvious reason. The third estate had seized the magistracy; it had driven out the men of the sword; it reigned there in an absolute manner, except in various parliaments of the nobility, as judge, advocate, prosecutor, clerk etc.; it made civil and criminal law, and with the aid of parliamentary usurpation, even exercised political power. The fortune, honor, and life of the citizen, was its concern: everyone abided by its judgements, every head bowed beneath its sword of justice. When it enjoyed such boundless power, what need for it to seek a feeble fraction of that power in assemblies where it only appeared on its knees?

The people, transformed into monks, took refuge in the cloister, and governed society through religious opinion; the people transformed into tax-collectors and bankers, took refuge in finance, and governed society through money; the people changed into magistrates, took refuge in tribunals, and governed society through the legal system. The great kingdom of France, aristocratic in its regions or provinces, was collectively democratic, under the leadership of its king, with whom it agreed perfectly, and almost always progressed in harmony. It is that which explains its long existence. There is a new history of France to write concerning all this, or rather the history of France has not yet been written.

All the great questions mentioned above were particularly at issue in the years 1786, 1787 and 1788. The minds of my compatriots found in their natural energy, in the privileges of province, clergy and nobility, in the collision between parliament and the States, abundant inflammatory matter. Monsieur de Calonne, one time steward of Brittany, had furthered division by favoring the cause of the third estate. Monsieur de Montmorin, and Monsieur de Thiard were too weak as commandants to allow the Court party to dominate. The nobility joined forces with the parliament, which itself was noble; now it resisted Monsieur Necker, Monsieur de Calonne, the Archbishop of Sens; now it repressed the popular movement that its

opposition had at first encouraged. It assembled, deliberated, protested; the communes and municipalities assembled, deliberated and protested in a contrary manner. The particular matter of the fouage (a feudal tax) by becoming entangled with more general matters increased the feelings of enmity. To understand this, it is necessary to explain the constitution of the Duchy of Brittany.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 2

#### Constitution of the States of Brittany – The meeting of the States

Paris, September 1821. (Revised December 1846)

The States of Brittany were more or less varied in form, like all the feudal States of Europe which they resembled. The kings of France acquired the rights of the Dukes of Brittany. The marriage contract of Duchess Anne, of 1491, not only gifted Brittany, as part of her dowry, to the crown of Charles VIII and Louis XII, but it stipulated a transaction which led to the end of a disagreement going back to the time of Charles de Blois and the Comte de Montfort. Brittany claimed that daughters inherited the duchy; France maintained that the succession only passed through the male line; and that when the latter failed, Brittany, like a vast fiefdom, had to return to the crown. Charles VIII and Anne, then Anne and Louis XII, mutually yielded their rights or pretensions. Claude, daughter of Anne and Louis XII, who became the wife of François I, left the Duchy of Brittany to her husband at her death. François I, following the plea by the States assembled at Vannes, united, by public edict at Nantes in 1532, the Duchy of Brittany to the crown of France, guaranteeing the Duchy its freedoms and privileges.

At that time, the States of Brittany met each year; but in 1630 their meeting became biannual. The governor proclaimed the opening of the States. The three orders assembled, according to rank, in a church or in the halls of a monastery. Each order deliberated separately: there were three private gatherings with various storms blowing, which became a combined hurricane when the clergy, nobility and third estate came together. The Court blew on the discord, and in that narrow battlefield as in a greater arena, talent, vanity, and ambition were at play.

The Capuchin friar, Le Pere Grégoire de Rostrenen, in the dedication to his *Dictionnaire français-breton*, speaks, in this way, to our Lords of the Breton States:

*‘If it was not acceptable for a roman orator to praise the august assembly of the Roman Senate, is it right for me to venture to eulogize your august assembly, which recreates for us so worthily the idea of what the ancient and the new Rome possessed of majesty and respectability?’*

Rostrenen shows that Celtic is one of the primitive languages which Gomer, Japhet’s eldest son, brought to Europe, and that the later Bretons, despite their size, are descended from giants. Unfortunately, the Breton children of Gomer, for a long time separated from France, have allowed some of their old titles to perish: their charters, to which they gave too little importance compared with their ties to the common history, too often lack that authenticity on which the decipherers of title-deeds for their part set far too high a price.

The meeting of the Breton States was a time of galas and balls: one dined with *Monsieur le commandant*, one dined with *Monsieur le Président* of the Nobility, one dined with *Monsieur le Président* of the Clergy, one dined with *Monsieur le Trésorier* of the States, one dined with *Monsieur l’intendant* of the Province, one dined with *Monsieur le Président* of the Parliament: one dined everywhere: and one wine! Sitting at the long refectory tables Du Guesclin ploughmen, Duguay-Trouin sailors could be seen, old guardsman’s steel blades at their sides or little boarding-cutlasses. All the gentlemen attending the States in person resembled nothing more than a Polish Diet, Poland on foot, not on horseback, a Diet of Scythians, not Sarmatians.

Unfortunately, they enjoyed themselves too much. The balls continued. Bretons are noted for their dancing and the tunes to which they dance. Madame de Sévigné has described our political junkets among the moors, like those feasts of fairies and sorcerers that take place at night on the heather:

*'Now you shall have,' she writes, 'news of our States, and pay the price of being a Breton. Monsieur de Chaulnes arrived on Sunday evening, with all the noise Vitré can manage: on Monday morning he wrote me a letter; I responded to it by going to dine with him. We ate at two tables in the same room; there were four covers to each table; Monsieur occupied one, and Madame the other. The food was excessive, they carried away whole platters of roast meat; and for the pyramids of fruit it was necessary to raise the height of the doorways. Our forefathers never anticipated this sort of thing, since they did not even understand the need to make doorways taller than themselves....After dinner, Messieurs de Locmaria and Coëtlogon danced marvelous passe-pieds and minuets with two Breton ladies, with an air that courtiers could not approach: they demonstrated Bohemian and Bas-Breton steps with charming delicacy and exactness...There is gaming, fine eating, freedom day and night, attracting the whole of society. I had never seen the States before; it's a very fine thing. I do not think there is a provincial gathering that has as grand an air as this one; it should be the case, at least, since there is not a single person at war or at court; only the little standard-bearer (Monsieur de Sévigné, the son) who may return one day like the others...An infinity of gifts, pensions, repairs to the roads and towns, fifteen or twenty great tables, continual gaming, balls eternally, plays three times a week, a great show: there you have the States. I omitted the three or four casks of wine that have been consumed.'*

Bretons have found it hard to excuse Madame de Sévigné for her mockery. I am less severe; but I dislike the fact that she says: 'You speak to me very amusingly of our efforts. We are no longer so broken: one day in eight suffices to maintain justice. It is true that hanging now seems a refreshing change to me.' That is to take the flippant language of the Court too far: Barrère speaks of the guillotine with the same lightness. In 1793, the drownings at Nantes were spoken of as republican marriages: popular despotism reproduced the facile style of royal despotism.

The Parisian snobs, who accompanied the King's gentlemen to the States, related that we country squires lined our pockets with tinsplate so as to carry Monsieur the Commandant's fricasseed chicken home to our wives. They paid dearly for that raillery. A certain Comte de Sabran was left dead in the square not so long ago, in exchange for his unpleasant remarks. This descendant of troubadours and Provençal kings, tall as a Swiss, was killed by a little hare-courser from Morbihan, no higher than a Laplander. This Ker yielded nothing to his adversary in point of genealogy: if Saint Elzéar de Sabran was a close relative of Saint Louis, Saint Corentin, the great-uncle of the noble Ker, was Bishop of Quimper under King Gallon II, three hundred years after Jesus-Christ.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 3

The royal revenues in Brittany – Revenues peculiar to the province – The fouage (feudal tax)  
– I attend my first political meeting – A Scene

The royal revenues, in Brittany, were derived from discretionary gifts, varied according to need; the income from the crown estate, which one might put at three to four hundred thousand francs; and the stamp duty etc.

Brittany had revenues peculiar to itself, which required it to accept the charges imposed as follows: the grand and the petit devoir, which affected liquid assets and their transfers, furnished two millions a year; then there were the sums derived from the fouage. There should be scarcely any doubt of the importance of the fouage in our history; it was to the French Revolution what stamp duty was to the revolution in the United States.

Fouage (Latin: *focagium*) (*census pro singulis FOCIS exactus*: a tax imposed on every home) was a feudal rent, a kind of tallage, imposed on the common people for every hearth. By gradual increases in the fouage, the province's debt was paid. In time of war, expenditure amounted to more than seven millions from one session to another, the major source of income. The idea of creating financial capital derived from fouage was conceived and instituted as a rent benefiting the levier of fouage: whereas fouage had actually never been more than a loan. The injustice (though a lawful injustice, in terms of royal custom) was in allowing it to fall only on commoners' property. The townships never ceased complaining; the nobility, clinging less to their money than to their privileges would not allow discussion of any charge which might make them taxable. Such were the issues, when the fiery Breton States met in the month of December 1788.

Their minds were agitated then for various reasons: the Assembly of Notables, regional taxation, the corn trade, the impending session of the States-General and the affair of the necklace, the plenary Court and The Marriage of Figaro, the Grand Bailiwicks and Cagliostro and Mesmer, and a thousand other things, serious or futile, were objects of controversy in every family.

The Breton nobility, in its own right, was summoned to Rennes to protest against the establishment of the plenary Court. I went to this gathering: it was the first political meeting I attended. I was amazed and amused by the shouts I heard. They climbed on tables and chairs; they gesticulated, all spoke at once. The Marquis de Trémargat, 'Peg-Leg', spoke with the voice of Stentor: 'Let us all go to the Commandant, Monsieur de Thiard'; and say to him: 'The Breton nobility is at your door, demanding to speak with you: even the King would not refuse!' At this stroke of eloquence cheers shook the rafters. He cried again: 'Even the King would not refuse!' The shouts and stamping redoubled. We went to see Monsieur the Comte de Thiard, a gentleman of the Court, erotic poet, a gentle and frivolous soul, mortally wearied by our noise; he looked at us as if we were hooting owls, wild boars, savage beasts; he burned with desire to quit our Armorica, and had no wish to refuse us entry into his hotel. Our orator told him what we desired, after which we drew up this declaration: 'Let us declare those to be vile who would accept a place either in the new administration of justice, or the administration of the States, neither of which have been

endorsed by the constitutional law of Brittany.’ Twelve gentlemen were chosen to carry this document to the King: on arrival in Paris they were imprisoned in the Bastille, from which they later emerged as heroes; they were received with laurel branches on their return. **We** wore coats with large mother-of-pearl buttons bordered with ermine, round which were inscribed in Latin this device: ‘Death before dishonour.’ We triumphed over the Court which all the world triumphed over and we fell with it into the same abyss.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 4

My mother retires to Saint-Malo

Paris, October 1821.

At this time, my brother, pursuing his plans, decided to obtain my admission to the Order of Malta. For this it was necessary for me to receive the tonsure: it could be given by Monsieur Cortois de Pressigny, Bishop of Saint-Malo. So I went to my native city where my good mother had settled; she no longer had her children with her; she spent the days in church, the evenings knitting. Her absent-mindedness was unbelievable: I met her in the street one morning, carrying one of her slippers under her arm, by way of a prayer-book. From time to time old friends would penetrate her retreat, and talk about the good old days. When we were alone, she would improvise beautiful stories for me in verse. In one of these stories the devil carried off a chimney along with a heathen, and the poet wrote:

*'The devil in the avenue  
Marched so, to and fro,  
That they lost sight of it,  
In less than an hour or two.'*

'It seems to me, that the devil took his time,' I said. But Madame de Chateaubriand proved to me that I had understood nothing: she was delightful, my mother.

She had a long ballad about the True story of a wild duck, in the town of Montfort-la-Cane-lez-Saint-Malo. A certain lord had imprisoned a young girl of great beauty in the Château de Montfort, intending to steal her honor. Through a skylight she saw the church of Saint Nicholas; she prayed to the saint, her eyes full of tears, and was miraculously transported beyond the castle walls; but she fell into the hands of the criminal's servants, who wished to use her as they supposed their master had. The poor and desperate girl, looking for help on every side, saw only some wild ducks on the château's lake. Renewing her prayers to Saint Nicholas, she begged him to allow these creatures to testify to her innocence, so that if she should lose her life, and could not accomplish the vows she had made to Saint Nicholas, the birds might fulfil them in their own way, in her name and on her behalf.

The girl died within a year: behold, at the translation of the bones of Saint Nicholas, on the 9th of May, a wild duck accompanied by her little ducklings came to the church of Saint Nicholas. She entered and flapped about in front of the image of the blessed Redeemer, applauding Him by beating her wings; after which she returned to the lake, having left behind one of her little ones as an offering. Sometime later, the duckling returned to her without anyone noticing. For two centuries or more afterwards, the duck, always the same duck, returned, on the appointed day, with her brood, to the church of the great Saint-Nicholas at Montfort. The story was written down and printed in 1652; the author justly remarking: 'that it was an inconsiderable thing in the sight of God, only a feeble wild duck; nevertheless she played her part in order to render homage to his grandeur; Saint Francis' cicada was even less esteemed, and yet its humming delighted the heart of a Seraphim.' But Madame de Chateaubriand followed a suspect tradition: in her

ballad, the girl imprisoned at Montfort was a princess, who was changed into a duck, to escape her assailant's violence. I can only remember one couplet of the verses from my mother's ballad:

*'Duck the beautiful has come,  
Duck the beautiful has come,  
And flown, through the gate,  
Off to a lentil-filled lake.'*



## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 5

#### Receiving the tonsure - The environs of Saint-Malo

Paris, October 1821.

As Madame de Chateaubriand was a true saint, she persuaded the Bishop of Saint-Malo to give me the tonsure; he had scruples regarding this: granting the ecclesiastical mark to a soldier and layman seemed to him a profanation that smacked of simony. Monsieur Cortois de Pressigny, today Archbishop of Besançon, and Peer of France, is a good and worthy man. He was young then, a protégé of the Queen, and on the way to fortune, which he achieved later by a better road: that of persecution.

In uniform, sword at my side, I knelt at the prelate's feet; he cut two or three locks of hair from the crown of my head; this was called the tonsure, of which I received a formal certificate. With this certificate I could call on two hundred thousand livres of private income, as soon as my proofs of nobility had been accepted in Malta: an abuse, no question, of the ecclesiastical order, but a useful thing in the political order of the old Constitution. Was it not better for a kind of military benefice to grace the soldier's sword rather than the mantle of an abbé who would have spent the fat of his priestly revenue in the streets of Paris?

The tonsure, conferred on me for the aforementioned reasons, has led ill-informed biographers to claim that I first entered the Church.

This took place in 1788. I had horses, and rode in the countryside, or galloped beside the waves, my old mournful friends; I would dismount and play with them; all the howling brood of *Scylla* leapt at my knees for me to caress them: *Nunc vada latrantis Scyllae*: now Scylla's howling waves. I have travelled great distances to see Nature's landscapes; I might have been content with those my native country offered me.

Nothing is more delightful than the twelve to fifteen miles around Saint-Malo. The banks of the Rance, as you trace the river from near its mouth to Dinan, are enough in themselves to merit the traveler's attention; a constant mixture of rocks and greenery, sandbanks and forests, creeks and hamlets, the ancient manors of feudal Brittany and the modern habitations of commercial Brittany. These latter were constructed in the days when the merchants of Saint-Malo were so wealthy that on festive days they would scatter their *piastres*, throwing them red hot through the windows into the crowd. These habitations of theirs were very luxurious. Bonaban, the chateau of Messieurs de Lasaudre, is of marble in part, imported from Genoa, with a magnificence of which we scarcely have an idea in Paris. La Brillantais, Le Beau, Montmarin, La Balue, Le Colombier are or were adorned with orangeries, water-jets and statues. Sometimes the gardens sloped down to a river beneath arcades with lime-tree porticos, through a colonnade of pines, to the end of a lawn; above the tulip-beds the sea revealed its vessels, its calm and its storms.

Each peasant, sailor and ploughman is the owner of a little white cottage with a garden: among the vegetables and herbs, currant-bushes, roses, irises and garden marigolds, you find a Cayenne tea-plant, a head of Virginian tobacco, and a Chinese flower, or some such souvenir of another shore and another climate: it is the owner's chart and itinerary. The coastal tenant-farmers are of fine Norman stock; the

women tall, slender, agile, wear grey woolen bodices, short petticoats of calamanco and striped silk and white stockings with colored clocks. Their brows are shaded by a wide head-dress in dimity or cambric, with flaps that stand up in the form of a cap or float in the manner of a veil. A silver chain hangs in several loops at their left side. Every morning, in spring, these northern daughters, stepping from their boats as though they were once more invading the country, carry baskets of fruit and shells filled with curds to market: when they balance black jars full of milk or flowers on their heads, when the lace-bands of their white wimples set off their blue eyes, pink faces, and blonde hair beaded with dew, the Valkyries of the Edda of whom the youngest is Futurity, or the Canephorai of Athens were never as graceful. Is this picture still a faithful likeness? Those women are doubtless no more; they exist only in my memory.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 6

#### The ghost - Illness

Paris, October 1821.

I left my mother, and went to visit my elder sisters near Fougères. I stayed a month with Madame de Chateaubourg. Her two country houses, Lascardais and Le Plessis, near Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier, known for its fortress and its battle, were situated in a country of rocks, moors and woods. My sister had Monsieur Livorel as her steward, a former Jesuit, to whom a strange thing happened.

After he was appointed as steward of Lascardais, it chanced that the Comte de Chateaubourg, the father, died: Monsieur Livorel who had not met him was installed as guardian of the castle. The first night he slept there alone, he saw a pale old man, in a dressing gown and night-cap, enter his apartment, carrying a little candle. The apparition approached the hearth, set his candlestick down on the mantelpiece, relit the fire and sat down in his armchair. Monsieur Livorel trembled all over. After two hours of silence, the old man rose, took up his candle, and left the room, closing the door.

Next day, the steward told the farmers of his adventure, who on hearing his description of the lemur affirmed that it was their old master. It did not end there: if Monsieur Livorel glanced behind him in the forest, he saw the phantom; if he had to cross a stile in the fields, the shade was straddling the stile. One day, the persecuted wretch ventured to say: 'Monsieur de Chateaubourg, leave me alone'; the revenant replied: 'No.' Monsieur Livorel, a sober-minded realist, quite lacking in imagination, would retell his story to whoever might wish it, always in the same manner and with the same conviction.

Sometime later in Normandy I was in the company of a brave officer suffering from cerebral fever. We were found lodgings in a farmhouse: an old tapestry, lent by the owner of the place, separated my bed from that of the sick man. Behind the tapestry they bled the patient; to ease his suffering they plunged him in icy baths; he shivered under this torture, his fingernails turned blue, his face was a purple grimace; with teeth clenched and head bared the long beard falling from his pointed chin served to cover his wet, skinny naked chest.

When the illness touched him, he opened an umbrella, thinking to shelter from his tears: if such a method indeed protected against tears a statue would need to be erected in honor of its discoverer.

My only moments of relief were those when I would walk in the village churchyard, built on a little hill. My companions there were the dead, a few birds, and the setting sun. I would dream of society in Paris, my early years, my phantom, and those woods of Combourg which I was so near to in space, so distant from in time; I would return again to my poor wretch: it was the blind leading the blind.

Alas! A blow, a fall, a moral affliction might have robbed Homer, Newton, Bossuet of their genius, and those divine mortals, instead of exciting profound pity, bitter and eternal regrets, might have become objects of derision! Many people I have known and loved happened to have their reason disturbed when with me, as if I carried the seeds of contagion. I can only explain Cervantes' masterpiece and its cruel

cheerfulness, by a sad reflection: in considering the whole of being, in weighing good and evil, one might be tempted to wish for any event that brought forgetfulness, as a means of escaping oneself: a joyful drunkard is a happy creature. Religion aside, ignorance is bliss, to reach death without having suffered life.

I brought back my compatriot completely cured.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 7

The States of Brittany in 1789 – Insurrection – The death of Saint-Riveul, my friend from college

Paris, October 1821.

Madame Lucille and Madame de Farcy, having returned to Brittany with me, wished to return to Paris; but I was detained by provincial unrest. The States were summoned for the end of December 1788. The commune of Rennes, and afterwards the other communes of Brittany, had made a decree forbidding their deputies from being involved in any matter before the question of fouage had been settled.

The Comte de Boisgelin, who had to preside over the order of nobility hastened to reach Rennes. The gentlemen were summoned by individual letter, and included those who, like me, were still too young to provide an authoritative voice. We might be assailed; it was a matter of counting arms as much as votes: we took up our posts.

Several meetings were held at Monsieur de Boisgelin's residence before the States opened. All the scenes of confusion at which I had been present recurred. The Chevalier de Guer, the Marquis de Trémargat, my uncle the Comte de Bedée, who was called Bedée the artichoke because of his fatness, in contrast to another Bedée, tall and slender, who was called Bedée the asparagus, broke several chairs while climbing onto them in order to hold forth. The Marquis de Trémargat, the wooden-legged naval officer, created many enemies for his order: one day they were discussing the establishment of a military college where the sons of impoverished nobles would be educated, when a member of the third estate shouted: 'And what of our sons? What of them?' – 'The workhouse,' Trémargat replied: a comment which, spreading among the crowd, quickly took seed.

In the midst of these meetings I noticed a trait in my character which I have recognized since in politics and military affairs: the hotter my friends and colleagues become, the cooler I become; I would watch them set light to a platform or a cannon with the same indifference: I have never saluted words or bullets.

The result of our deliberations was that the nobility would deal with general matters first, and would not discuss the fougage until after the other questions were addressed; a resolution directly opposed to that of the third estate. The nobles had no great confidence in the clergy, who often deserted them, especially when the Bishop of Rennes presided, a smooth-tongued, measured, individual, who spoke with a slight lisp which was not unattractive, and took good care to nurture his chances at Court. A newspaper, La Sentinelle du Peuple, produced by some hack at Rennes, reached Paris, and fomented hatred.

The States were held in the Jacobin convent, in the Place du Palais. We entered the meeting room in order of arrival: we were no sooner in session than the crowd besieged us. The 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th of January 1789 were wretched days. The Comte de Thiard had few troops; an indecisive leader, lacking in vigor, he wavered and failed to act. The law-school at Rennes, with Moreau at its head, had summoned the young men of Nantes; four hundred of them arrived and the Commandant, despite his exhortations, could not prevent them invading the town. Meetings of various kinds, on the Montmorin Field, and in the cafes, lead to bloody encounters.

Weary of being packed in our room, we decided to burst out, sword in hand; it was rather a fine spectacle. At a signal from our President, we all drew our swords at the same moment, shouting: 'Long live Brittany!' and like a garrison without any other recourse, we executed a wild sortie, to pass through the heart of our besiegers. The crowd received us with howls, showers of stones, blows from iron-tipped sticks, and pistol shots. We forced a gap in the massed ranks which closed over us again. Several gentlemen were wounded, dragged along, and torn, covered with bruises and contusions. We managed to disengage with great difficulty, everyone regaining his lodgings.

Duels ensued between the gentlemen and the law students, and their friends from Nantes. One of these duels took place in public on the Place Royale; honors rested with the elder Keralieu, a naval officer, who when attacked fought with amazing energy, to the applause of his young adversaries.

Another gathering formed. The Comte de Montboucher saw a student named Ulliac in the crowd, to whom he said: 'Monsieur, this concerns the two of us.' The crowd made a circle round them; Montboucher disarmed Ulliac and returned his sword: they embraced and the crowd dispersed.

At least the Breton nobility did not succumb without honor. They refused to send deputies to the States-General, because they were not convoked according to the fundamental laws of the province's Constitution; they flocked in great numbers to join the Army of Princes, to be decimated in the Army of Condé, or with Charette in the fighting in the Vendée. Would it have altered the majority in the National Assembly if it had joined that assembly? That is hardly likely: in great social transformations, individual resistance, though honorable in the participants, is powerless against fate. However it is difficult to say what might have been achieved by a man of Mirabeau's genius, if, with opposing views, he had been met with in the ranks of the Breton nobility.

The young Boishue, and Saint-Riveul, my school-friend, had died before these encounters, on their way to the Chamber of Nobles; the former was defended in vain by his father, who acted as his second.

Reader, I must detain you: witness the first drops of blood flow which the Revolution was obliged to spill. Heaven willed that they should emerge from the veins of a childhood friend. Imagine if I had fallen instead of Saint-Riveul; they would have said of me, altering only the name, what they said of the victim with whom the great immolation began: 'A gentleman, named Chateaubriand, was killed while on his way to the Chamber of the States.' Those two words would have replaced my long history. Would Saint-Riveul have played my role on earth? Was he destined for fame or obscurity?

Pass on, now, Reader; cross the river of blood which separates forever the old world, which you are leaving, from the new world on whose threshold you will die.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 8

The year 1789 – Journey from Brittany to Paris–Turmoil along the way – How Paris looked – Dismissal of Monsieur Necker – Versailles – The gaiety of the Royal Family - General insurrection – The taking of the Bastille

Paris, November 1821.

The year 1789, so notable in our history and in the history of the human race, found me on the moors of my native Brittany; indeed I could not leave the province until quite late, and did not reach Paris until after the sack of the Maison Réveillon, the opening of the States-General, the constitution of the Third Estate as a National Assembly, the Tennis Court Oath, the Royal Speech of the 23rd June, and the union of the Nobles and Clergy with the Third-Estate.

There was turmoil along my route: in the villages the peasants were stopping coaches, asking for passports, interrogating travelers. The nearer one approached the capital, the more the unrest grew. Passing through Versailles, I saw troops quartered in the orangery; artillery trains parked in the courtyards; a temporary hall for the National Assembly erected in the Place du Palais, and the deputies coming and going surrounded by sightseers, palace servants and soldiers.

In Paris, the streets were obstructed by crowds standing at the doors of bakers' shops: passers-by stood debating at street corners; tradesmen came from their shops to hear and tell the news on their doorsteps; at the Palais-Royal agitators congregated: Camille Desmoulins began to emerge from the crowd.

I had scarcely arrived, with Madame de Farcy and Lucile, at a hotel in the Rue de Richelieu, when a riot began: the crowd rushed to the Abbaye to release some French Guards arrested on their officers' orders. The non-commissioned officers of an artillery regiment quartered at the Invalides joined the people. The army's defection was beginning.

The Court, now yielding now trying to resist, in a tangle of obstinacy and weakness, bravado and fear, allowed itself to be dictated to by Mirabeau, who demanded the removal of the troops, though it did not agree to remove them: accepting the affront but not eliminating its cause. In Paris a rumor spread that an army was entering by the Montmartre sewer; that dragoons were to force the barriers. Someone suggested stripping the roadways and carrying the paving-stones to the fifth floors to hurl them down on the tyrant's satellites: everyone set to work. In the midst of this confusion, Monsieur Necker received the order to resign. The new ministry consisted of Messieurs de Breteuil, de la Galaisière, de la Vauguyon, de la Porte, Marshal de Broglie, and Foullon. They replaced Messieurs de Montmorin, de la Luzerne, de Saint-Priest and de Nivernais.

A Breton poet, a new arrival, had asked me to take him to Versailles. There are people who will go and visit gardens and fountains, while empires are being overthrown: scribblers especially have this faculty of remaining abstracted, obsessed, during the greatest of events; their phrase or stanza is everything to them.

I took my Pindar to the gallery of Versailles during mass. The Court was radiant: the dismissal of Monsieur Necker had raised their spirits; they all felt sure of victory: perhaps Sanson and Simon, among the crowd, were spectators of the Royal Family's delight.

The Queen passed by with her two children; their blond hair seeming to await the presence of crowns: Madame the Duchesse d'Angoulême, aged eleven, drew all eyes with her proud virginity; the flower of the nobility through her blood and her girlish innocence, she seemed like Corneille's orange flower, in La Guirlande de Julie:

'I possess the glory of my birth.'

The little Dauphin walked along, protected by his sister, and Monsieur Du Touchet followed his pupil; he noticed me and obligingly pointed me out to the Queen. Casting me a smiling glance, she gave me the same gracious nod she had given me on the day of my presentation. I will never forget that look of hers so soon to be extinguished. Marie-Antoinette, in smiling, shaped her mouth so positively, that the memory of that smile (what an appalling thing!) allowed me to recognize that jaw-bone of that daughter of kings when the head of that unfortunate woman was discovered during the exhumations of 1815.

The counter-stroke to the blow struck in Versailles resounded in Paris. On my return I crossed the path of a crowd carrying busts, covered in crape, of Monsieur Necker and Monsieur the Duc d'Orléans. They shouted: 'Long live Necker! Long live the Duc d'Orléans!' and among those shouts could be heard one that was bolder and more unexpected: 'Long live Louis XVII!' Long live that child whose name would have been left out of his family's funerary inscription, if I had not recalled it to the memory of the Chamber of Peers! If Louis XVI had abdicated, and Louis XVII been placed on the throne, with Monsieur the Duc d'Orléans declared as Regent, what would have happened?

In the Place Louis XV, the Prince de Lambesc, at the head of the Royal-Allemand Regiment, drove the crowd back into the Tuileries gardens, and wounded an old man: suddenly the tocsin sounded. The sword-cutler's shops were forced, and thirty thousand muskets taken from the Invalides. They armed themselves with pikes, staves, pitchforks, sabres and pistols; Saint-Lazare was sacked and the city barriers burnt down. The electors of Paris took over the government of the capital, and in a night sixty thousand citizens were organized, armed, and equipped as National Guards.

On the 14th of July the Bastille was taken. I was present, as a spectator at this attack on a few pensioners and a timid governor: if the gates had been kept closed, the crowd could never have entered the fortress. I saw two or three cannon shots fired, not by the pensioners, but by the French Guards who had climbed up to the towers. De Launay, the Governor, was dragged from his hiding place, and after suffering a thousand outrages was killed on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville; Flesselles, the provost of the merchants of Paris, had his brains blown out: this is the spectacle that heartless admirers found so admirable. In the midst of these murders, they indulged in wild orgies, as in the disturbances in Rome under Otho and Vitellius. Happily drunk, the 'conquerors of the Bastille', declared as such in the taverns, were driven about in carriages; prostitutes and sans-culottes, beginning their reign, escorted them. Passers-by took off their hats, with a respect born of fear, in front of these heroes, some of whom died of fatigue in the midst of their triumph. The keys of the Bastille multiplied; they were sent to all the important fools in the four



corners of the world. How many times I have missed making my fortune! If, as a spectator, I had inscribed my name on the list of conquerors, I would have a pension today.

Experts hastened to conduct a post-mortem of the Bastille. Temporary cafes were set up in tents; people crowded them, as at the Saint-Germain fair or *Longchamps*; files of carriages drove by or stopped at the foot of the turrets, the stones of which were being hurled down among clouds of dust. Elegantly dressed women and fashionable young men, standing on various levels of the Gothic ruins, mingled with the half-naked workers demolishing the walls, to the acclamation of the crowd. The most famous orators could be seen at this gathering-place, the best-known writers, the most celebrated painters, the most renowned actors and actresses, the dancers most in vogue, the most illustrious foreigners, the *grande*s of the Court and the ambassadors of Europe: the old France came here to meet its end, the new its beginning.

Every event, however wretched or odious it may be in itself, cannot be treated lightly if it occurs in serious circumstances and ushers in an era: what should have been seen in the taking of the Bastille (and what is still not seen) is not one violent act in the emancipation of a people, but the emancipation that resulted from that act.

What was admired, the incident, should have been condemned, and people should no longer have sought in it the final destiny of a people, the change of manners, ideas, political power, renewal of the human species, whose era the taking of the Bastille opened, like a blood-stained Jubilee. Savage anger created ruins, and beneath that anger was hidden the intelligence which built among those ruins the foundations of a new building.

But the nation which erred concerning the importance of the material event did not err concerning the importance of the moral fact: the Bastille was in its eyes a monument to its servitude; it seemed to it to have been erected at the gate of Paris, facing the sixteen pillars of Montfaucon's gibbet, like a scaffold for its liberties (After fifty-two years they have built fifteen Bastilles to suppress that liberty in whose name they destroyed the first Bastille: Note: Paris, 1841). In razing to the ground a State prison, the people thought to shatter the military yoke, and took on the tacit commitment to replace the army it dismissed: we know what wonders are born when a people become soldiers.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 9

The effect on the Court of the taking of the Bastille – The heads of Foulon and Bertier

Paris, November 1821.

Woken by the sound of the Bastille's fall as at the noise presaging the fall of a throne, Versailles passed from disdain to despondency. The King hastens to the National Assembly, gives a speech from the President's seat, announces an order to the troops to withdraw, and returns to his palace to the echo of cheers; a useless spectacle! Neither party believed they had converted the other: neither liberty which capitulates, nor power which humbles itself, obtains a jot of mercy from its enemies.

Eighty deputies left Versailles, to proclaim peace in the capital: festivities ensued. Monsieur Bailly was named as Mayor of Paris, Monsieur de Lafayette, commander of the National Guard: I never knew the former, a poor but respectable scientist, except through his misfortunes. Revolutions produce men in all their phases; some follow those revolutions through to the end, others begin them, but do not complete them.

Everyone dispersed; the courtiers left for Basle, Lausanne, Luxembourg and Brussels. Madame de Polignac, fleeing, met Monsieur Necker returning. The Comte d'Artois and his sons, and the three Condés, emigrated; they took with them the high clergy and a section of the nobility. The officers, threatened by their rebellious soldiers, yielded to the torrent that carried them away. Louis XVI alone remained to face the nation with his two children and their female attendants, the Queen, Mesdames Adélaïde and Victoire, and Madame Élisabeth. Monsieur, who remained until the Flight to Varennes was little help to his brother: though in assenting to the franchise in the Assembly of Notables he had helped decide the course of the Revolution, the Revolution distrusted him; he, Monsieur, had little liking for the King, did not understand the Queen, and was not liked by them.

Louis XVI came to the Hôtel de Ville on the 17th: a hundred thousand men, armed like the monks of the League, received him. He was harangued by Messieurs Bailly, Moreau de Saint-Méry, and Lally-Tolendal who all wept: the latter has remained prone to tears. The King was moved in turn; he fixed an enormous tricolor cockade on his hat; and was declared there and then to be a good man, Father of the French, King of a free people, which people was preparing, by virtue of its liberty, to cut off the head of that good man, its father and king.

A few days after this reconciliation, I was at the window of my hotel with my sisters and some Breton friends; we heard shouts of: 'Lock the doors! Lock the doors!' A ragged crowd appeared at one end of the street; two standards, difficult to see clearly at that distance, rose from their midst. As they came nearer we could make out two disheveled, disfigured heads, which Marat's heralds were carrying, each on the tip of a pike: they were the heads of Messieurs Foullon and Bertier. Everyone drew back from the windows; I remained. The assassins stopped in front of me, stretching their pikes towards me while singing, dancing about, jumping up in order to thrust the pale effigies in my face. An eye in one of those heads had leapt from its socket, and hung down on the unrecognizable face of the dead; the pike stuck out of the open

mouth, the teeth biting on metal: 'Brigands!' I shouted, unable to contain the indignation I felt, 'Is this how you understand liberty?' If I had possessed a gun I would have shot at those wretches as one shoots at wolves. They howled, redoubling their blows on the main door in the hope of breaking in, and adding my head to those of their victims. My sisters felt faint; the cowards in the hotel heaped reproaches on me. The murderers, who were being pursued, had no time to invade the building, and made off. Those heads, and others which I encountered soon after, altered my political tendencies; I was horrified by those cannibal feasts, and the idea of leaving France for some distant country took root in my mind.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 10

The recall of Monsieur Necker– The debate of the 4th August 1789 – The Day of the 5th October – The King is brought to Paris

Paris, November 1821.

Recalled to power on the 25th July, inaugurated, welcomed with celebrations, Monsieur Necker, the third successor to Turgot after Calonne and Taboureaux, was soon overtaken by events, and fell from popularity. It is one of the oddities of the time that so weighty a personality had been raised to ministerial office through the machinations of a man as mediocre and lightweight as the Marquis de Pezay. The Royal Accounts which in France replaced the system of loans with that of taxation, stirred people's ideas; women discussed income and expenditure; for the first time one saw, or thought one saw something in the working of numbers. These calculations, painted in clear colors à la Thomas, first established the reputation of the Director-General of Finance. A skillful manager of cash, but an economist devoid of ideas; a writer noble but bombastic; an honest man but without great virtue, the banker was one of those old actors who after introducing the play to the public from the forestage vanish as the curtain rises. Monsieur Necker was the father of Madame de Staël; his vanity would scarcely have allowed him to consider that his true claim on the memory of posterity would be his daughter's fame.

The monarchy was destroyed, as the Bastille had been, in the speech in the National Assembly on the evening of the 4th August. Those who, through hatred of the past, cry out against nobility these days, forget that it was a member of that nobility, the Vicomte de Noailles, supported by the Duc d'Aiguillon and by Mathieu de Montmorency, who toppled the edifice, the subject of revolutionary prejudice. On a motion initiated by the latter aristocratic deputy, feudal rights, the rights of the chase, of dovecotes and fishponds, the tithes on crops, the privileges of the orders, towns and provinces, personal servitude, manorial injustice, venality of office, were abolished. The greatest blows struck at the old constitution of the State were inflicted by noblemen. The aristocracy began the Revolution, the masses completed it: as the France of old owed its glory to the French nobility, the *New France* owed it its liberty, if liberty exists in France.

The soldiers camped on the outskirts of Paris had been dispersed, and by one of those perverse pieces of advice that muddled the King's will, the Flanders Regiment was summoned to Versailles. The Lifeguards gave a dinner for the officers of that regiment; heads grew overheated; the Queen appeared at the banquet with the Dauphin; toasts were drunk to the Royal Family; the King appeared in turn; the military band played the moving and popular air: *Ô Richard, ô mon roi!* The news of this had hardly reached Paris before hostile views gripped the city; it was claimed that Louis was refusing to sanction the *Declaration of Rights*, and would flee to Metz with the Comte d'Estaing; Marat spread the rumor: he was already writing *L'ami du peuple*.

The 5th of October arrived. I did not witness the events of that day. Accounts of it reached the capital early on the 6th. We were told, at the same moment, to expect a visit from the King. Timid in the salons, I was bold in public: I felt I had been born for solitude or the forum. I hurried to the Champs-Élysées: first canon appeared, with harpies, thieves and prostitutes astride them, making the most obscene remarks and the foulest gestures. Then in the midst of a horde of people of every age and sex, the Lifeguards marched

by, having exchanged their hats, swords and bandoliers with the National Guards: each of their horses carried two or three fishwives, dirty, drunk and disheveled bacchantes. Next came the deputation from the National Assembly; followed by the Royal carriages: they rolled along in the dusty shade of a forest of pikes and bayonets. Tattered rag-pickers, and butchers, blood-stained aprons round their thighs, naked blades at their belts, shirt-sleeves rolled, clung to the carriage-doors: other dark satyrs had climbed on the roof; yet more hung on to the footboards or perched on the box. They fired muskets and pistols, shouting: 'Here come the baker, the baker's wife and the little baker's boy!' Before the descendant of Saint-Louis, as an oriflamme, Swiss halberds held high the heads of two Lifeguards, powdered and curled by some Sèvres wigmaker.

Bailly, the astronomer, told Louis XVI, in the Hôtel de Ville, that the people, humane, respectful and loyal had conquered its king, and the King on his side, greatly touched and greatly pleased, declared that he had come to Paris of his own free will: unworthy lies born of violence and fear which at that time dishonored everyone and every party. Louis XVI was not insincere: he was weak; weakness is not insincerity, but it takes its place and fulfils its functions; the respect which the virtue and misfortune of the saintly, martyred King must inspire renders all human judgement well-nigh sacrilegious.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 11

#### The Constituent Assembly

The deputies left Versailles and held their first session on the 19th October in the great hall of the Archdiocese. On the 9th November, they transferred to the riding-school, the Manège, near the Tuileries. The rest of 1789 witnessed decrees which despoiled the clergy, dismantled the old magistracy and created assignats; the decree of the Paris commune to set up the first Committee of Investigation; and the judges' mandate to prosecute the Marquis de Favras.

The Constituent Assembly, despite the things it can be reproached with, nonetheless remains the most illustrious popular gathering that has ever appeared among nations, as much for the importance of its transactions, as for the magnitude of their results. There was no political question so profound that it failed to touch on it and resolve it appropriately. What would it have achieved, if it had held to the lists of grievances of the States-General and not attempted to deviate from them! All that human experience and intelligence had conceived, discovered and elaborated on for three centuries was in those lists. The various abuses of the old monarchy are indicated there, and remedies proposed; every type of freedom is demanded, for industry, manufacturing, commerce, roads, the army, tax, finance, schools, public education, etc. We have crossed abysses of crime, over heaps of glorious dead, to no purpose; The Republic and the Empire have achieved nothing: the Empire has only directed the brute force of arms that the Republic set in motion; it has left us centralization, energetic administration which I consider evils, but which alone perhaps could replace local administration once it had been destroyed and heads were full of ignorance and anarchy. As it stands we have not advanced one step since the Constituent Assembly: its efforts were like those of Hippocrates, the great physician of antiquity which, at the same time, delineated and pushed back the boundaries of science. Let me speak about a few members of that Assembly, and start with Mirabeau who summed up and dominated all the others.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 12

Mirabeau

Paris, November 1821.

Involved by the danger and disorder of his life in great events, and living among hardened criminals, brigands and adventurers, Mirabeau, tribune of the aristocracy, deputy for democracy, owed something to Gracchus, and Don Juan, Catiline and Guzman d'Alfarache, Cardinal de Richelieu and Cardinal de Retz, to the Regency roué and the Revolutionary savage: he possessed more than enough of Mirabeau, an exiled Florentine family that retained something of those fortified palaces and noble dissidents celebrated by Dante; a naturalized French family, in which the republican spirit of the Italian Middle Ages and the feudal spirit of our own Middle Ages were united in a succession of extraordinary men.

Mirabeau's ugliness, overlaying the background of his race's particular beauty, produced a powerful figure from the Last Judgement by Michelangelo, a compatriot of the Arrighetti. The furrows ploughed in the orator's face by smallpox had more the look of burn-scars. Nature seemed to have molded his head for empire or the gibbet, sculpted his arms to embrace a nation or capture a woman. When, gazing at the crowd, he shook his mane, it quietened; when he lifted his paw and showed his claws, the mob ran away swiftly. In the midst of the appalling disorder of a session, I have seen him at the rostrum, ugly, sombre, and motionless: he recalled Milton's chaos, impassive, and formless at the heart of confusion.

Mirabeau inherited something from his father and uncle, who, like Saint-Simon, wrote immortal pages haphazardly. His speeches for the rostrum were prepared for him: he took from them whatever his spirit could amalgamate with his true substance. If he adopted them in their entirety, he chopped them about mercilessly: it was obvious they were not written by him, from those words which he added at hazard, and which revealed the man. He drew energy from his vices; those vices were not born of a cool temperament, they concerned passions, deep, fiery, and stormy. Cynicism in manners, brought back to society, by annihilating the moral sense, a tribe of barbarians: these barbarians of civilization, ready to destroy like the Goths, lacked the power to create anything, as those men had: the latter were the giant offspring of virgin Nature; the former the monstrous abortions of Nature depraved.

I met Mirabeau twice at a banquet, once at the house of Voltaire's niece, the Marquise de Villette, once more at the Palais-Royal, with opposition deputies to whom Chapelier had introduced me: Chapelier went to the scaffold, in the same tumbrel as my brother and Monsieur de Malesherbes.

Mirabeau talked a great deal, and especially about himself. This lion's offspring, himself a lion with the head of a chimera, this man so positive in action, was full of romance, full of poetry, full of enthusiasm for imagination and language; one recognized in him the lover of Sophie, exalted in feeling and capable of sacrifice. 'I found her,' he said, 'that adorable woman... I knew what her soul was, that soul formed in Nature's hands in a moment of splendor.'

Mirabeau enchanted me with love stories, with longings for seclusion from which he fashioned arid discussions. He also interested me in another way: like me, he had been treated severely by his father, who had maintained, like mine, the inflexible tradition of absolute paternal authority. The famous guest

reached out to the political newcomer, and revealed almost nothing of the politics within; though it was that which occupied his thoughts; but he did let fall a few words of sovereign disdain for those men who proclaimed themselves superior because of the indifference they showed towards tragedies and crime. Mirabeau was born generous, appreciative of friendship, quick to pardon offence. Despite his immorality, he could not betray his conscience; he was only corrupt in private matters, his firm and upright spirit refused to make murder a subject for sublime intellect; he had no admiration for abattoirs and charnel-houses.

However, Mirabeau was not lacking in pride; he boasted outrageously; though he was established as a draper in order to be an elected member of the third estate (the nobility had made the honorable mistake of rejecting him) he was obsessed with his birth: a wild bird, whose nest was made between four turrets, as his father said. He never forgot that he had appeared at Court, ridden in a carriage and hunted with the King. He demanded to be called Count; he stuck to his guns and clothed his people in livery when everyone had stopped doing so. He referred at the slightest opportunity and most inopportune moments to his ancestor, Admiral Coligny. The *Moniteur* having referred to him as Riquet: 'Do you realize,' he said angrily to a journalist, 'that with your Riquet, you have bemused Europe for three days?' He repeated this impudent and well-known pleasantry: 'In any other family, my brother the Vicomte would be the intelligent man and the unruly subject; in my family, he is the fool and the philanthropist. Biographers attribute this witticism to the Vicomte himself, comparing himself with humility to the other members of his family.'

Mirabeau's deepest sentiments were Royalist; he pronounced these fine words: 'I would like to cure the French of superstition concerning the monarchy and substitute worship.' In a letter, destined for Louis XVI's eyes, he wrote: 'I would not wish to have worked to create only a vast destruction.' That however was his fate: Heaven, to punish us for misusing our talents, makes us repent of our achievements.

Mirabeau moved public opinion by employing two levers: on the one hand, he placed his point of leverage among the mob of which he was appointed the defender while scorning it; on the other, though a traitor to his order, he maintained sympathy for affinities of caste, and common interest. Such a thing would be impossible for a plebeian champion of the privileged classes; he would be abandoned by his own party without winning over the aristocracy, by nature ungrateful and un-winnable, when one is not born within its ranks. Besides, the aristocracy cannot just create a noble, since nobility is a child of time.

Mirabeau created a school. In liberating moral ties, they thought it transformed them into statesmen. These imitations only produced perverted little men, such as pride themselves on being corrupt thieves and are merely debauched rogues; such as think themselves lecherous, and are merely vile; such as boast of being criminals, and are merely base.

Too soon for his own good, too late for its good, Mirabeau sold himself to the Court, and the Court completed the purchase. He put his reputation at risk for a pension and an ambassadorship. Cromwell was on the point of bartering his future for a title and the Order of the Garter. Despite his pride, Mirabeau did not value himself highly. Now that an abundance of money and positions has raised the price of conscience, there is not a promotion that does not cost hundreds of thousands of francs and the highest honors the State can offer. The grave freed Mirabeau from his commitments, and rescued him from



dangers he would probably not have overcome: his life had shown his weakness for good; his death left him in possession of his power to do evil.

On our departure, after dinner, there was talk of Mirabeau's enemies; I found myself next to him and had not said a word. He looked me in the face with his proud stare, of vice and genius, and placing his hand on my shoulder, said: 'They never forgive me for my superiority!' I can still feel the impression of that hand, as if Satan had touched me with his fiery claw.

As Mirabeau fixed his gaze on the silent young man, had he any presentiment of my possibilities? Did he think he might one day appear in my memoirs? I was destined to become the historian of important men: they have paraded before me, without my needing to be hung on their coat as a trophy to be dragged along with them towards posterity.

Mirabeau has already undergone the metamorphosis that occurs to those of whom memory remains; transported from the Pantheon to the gutter, and transported from the gutter to the Pantheon again, he was raised by the great heights of that age which serve him today as a pedestal. One no longer sees the real Mirabeau, only the idealized Mirabeau such as the artists created, to render him a symbol, or mythological figure, of the age he represents: thus he became both falser and truer. Among so many reputations, actors, events, ruins, only three men stand out, each attached to each of the three great revolutionary phases, Mirabeau for the aristocracy, Robespierre for democracy, Bonaparte for despotism; the monarchy has no representative: France has paid too dearly for those three celebrated men not to admit to their quality.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 13

The sessions of the National Assembly - Robespierre

Paris, December 1821.

The sessions of the National Assembly offered an interest that the sessions of our own Chambers are far from approaching. One had to rise early to secure a place in the crowded galleries. Deputies arrived eating, talking, gesturing; they grouped themselves in various parts of the room, according to their opinions. The order of the day was read; after that the agreed subject was discussed, or an extraordinary motion. It was not a question of insipid points of law; the order of the day rarely omitted some scheme of destruction. They spoke for and against; everybody improvised as best he could. Debates grew stormy; the galleries joined in the discussion, applauding and cheering, hissing and booing the speakers. The president rang his bell; the deputies shouted from one bench to another. Mirabeau the Younger seized his opponent by the collar; Mirabeau the Elder cried: 'Silence, the thirty votes!' One day, I was seated behind the Royalist opposition; a noble from the Dauphiné in front of me, a swarthy little man, leapt on to his seat in fury, and called to his friends: 'Let us fall, sword in hand, on those rascals there.' He pointed to the majority side. The market women, knitting away in the galleries, heard him, rose from their seats, and shouted together, stockings in hand, foaming at the mouth: 'To the lamp-posts, with them!' The Vicomte de Mirabeau, Lautrec and a few other young nobles wanted to take the galleries by storm.

Soon this fracas was drowned out by another: petitioners, armed with pikes, appeared at the bar: 'People are dying of hunger,' they said, 'it is time to act against the aristocrats and to rise to the level of events.' The president assured these citizens of his respect: 'We have our eye on the traitors,' he replied, 'and the Assembly will mete out justice.' At this, fresh tumult: the deputies of the Right shouted that we were heading for anarchy; the deputies of the Left replied that the people was free to express its will, that it had the right to complain of the supporters of despotism, sitting in the midst of the nation's representatives: they spoke thus of their colleagues to that sovereign people, which waited for them under the street lamps.

The evening sessions were more scandalous than the morning ones: people speak better and more boldly by candlelight. The hall of the Manège was then a veritable theatre, where one of the world's greatest dramas was played out. The leading characters still belonged to the old order of things; their terrifying understudies, hidden behind them, said little or nothing. At the end of one violent discussion, I saw a common-looking deputy mount the rostrum, with a grey impassive face, neatly dressed hair, decently dressed like the steward of a good house, or the notary of a village careful of his appearance. He gave a long and tedious report; nobody listened; I asked his name: it was Robespierre. The men in shoes were ready to leave the salons, and already the clogs were kicking at the door.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 14

#### Society – How Paris appeared

Paris, December 1821.

When, before the Revolution, I had read the history of public disturbances in various nations, I could not understand how one could survive in such times; I was astonished that Montaigne could write so cheerfully in a château he could not walk round without risking capture by bands of Leaguers or Protestants.

The Revolution allowed me to understand the possibility of such an existence. Moments of crisis produce an intensification of life in men. In a society which is dissolving and reforming itself, the struggle of two geniuses, the clash between past and future, the mingling of old ways and new, creates a transitory fusion which leaves not a moment for boredom. The passions and characters set free reveal themselves with an energy that they do not possess in a well-ordered city. Breaches of the law, emancipation from duties, customs and proprieties, even the danger, add to the interest in such disorder. The human race in holiday mood parades through the streets, free of its masters, returned for the moment to a state of nature, and does not start to feel the need for social restraint until it begins to bear the yoke of the new tyrants whom license breeds.

I can depict the society of 1789 and 1790 in no better a way than by comparing it with the architecture of the age of Louis XII and François I, when the Greek orders were combined with Gothic style, or rather by likening it to the collection of ruins and tombs of all eras, piled up in the cloisters of the Petits-Augustins, after the Terror: only the debris I speak of was alive and ceaselessly changing. There were literary gatherings, political meetings, and public entertainments in every corner of Paris; future celebrities wandered amongst the crowd unrecognized, like the souls on the banks of Lethe before enjoying the light. I saw Marshal Gouvion-Saint-Cyr act at the Théâtre du Marais, in Beaumarchais's *La Mère coupable*. One passed from the Club des Feuillants to the Club des Jacobins, from balls and gambling houses to the meetings in the Palais-Royal, from the gallery of the National Assembly to the gallery of the open air. In the streets public deputations, cavalry pickets, and infantry patrols went to and fro. Next to a man in a French coat, with powdered hair, sword by his side, hat under his arm, in pumps and silk stockings, walked a man with cropped un-powdered hair, in an English dress-coat with an American cravat. In the theatres the actors gave the latest news; the pit sang patriotic ditties. Topical plays drew full-houses: if a priest appeared on stage the audience would shout: 'Calotin: Holy Joe!' and the priest would reply: 'Gentlemen, long live the Nation!' They flocked to hear Mandini, his wife, Viganoni and Rovedino sing at the Opera-Buffera, after hearing the strains of the Ça ira; they went to admire Madame Dugazon, Madame Saint-Aubin, Carline, little Mademoiselle Olivier, Mademoiselle Contat, Molé, Fleury, and the new talent Talma, after seeing Favras hanged.

The walks on the Boulevard du Temple and the Boulevard des Italiens, known as Coblentz, and the paths in the Tuileries Gardens were crowded with well-dressed women: three young daughters of Grétry shone there, pink and white like their dresses: all three died soon after. 'She fell asleep forever', Grétry said, speaking of his eldest daughter, 'sitting on my lap, as beautiful as when she was alive.' A host of carriages ploughed over the muddy crossroads where the sans-culottes splashed about, and the lovely

Madame de Buffon could be seen, sitting alone in the Duc d'Orléans' phaeton, waiting at the door of some club.

The elegant and tasteful in aristocratic society met at the Hôtel de La Rochefoucauld, at the soirees of Mesdames de Poix, d'Hénin, de Simiane, and de Vaudreuil, or in the salons of the higher magistracy that remained open. At Monsieur Necker's, at Monsieur le Comte de Montmorin's, at the houses of the various ministers, there gathered (together with Madame de Staël, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, Mesdames de Beaumont and de Sérilly) all the new celebrities of France, with all the freedom of the new manners. The shoemaker knelt to measure your foot in the uniform of the National Guard; the monk who on Friday trailed his black or white frock, on Sunday wore a round hat and layman's coat; the clean-shaven Capuchin, read the paper in a tavern, and a nun sat gravely in the middle of a circle of frivolous women: she was a sister or aunt turned out of her convent. The crowd visited those religious houses now open to the world as travellers at Granada wander the empty halls of the Alhambra, or at Tivoli linger beneath the columns of the Sibyl's temple.

For the rest, there were many duels and love-affairs, prison liaisons and political friendships, many a mysterious rendezvous among ruins, under a serene sky, amongst the peace and poetry of Nature; remote, silent and solitary walks mingled with undying oaths and indefinable affections, to the dull roar of a vanishing world, to the far-off sound of a crumbling society, which threatened in its fall these joys placed beneath the feet of events. When one was lost sight of for twenty-four hours, one was not certain of being found again. Some took to the road of Revolution, others meditated civil war; others left for Ohio, sending ahead plans for châteaux to be built among the savages; others went to join the Princes: all this cheerfully, and often without a sou in their pockets: the Royalists affirming that one of these mornings the whole thing would be stopped by act of parliament, and the patriots, just as optimistic in their hopes, announcing the reign of peace and happiness with that of liberty. They sang:

*'The holy candle of Arras,  
The torch of Provence,  
Though they won't light us  
They'll set fire to France:*

*No, we cannot touch them,  
But we'll hope to snuff them.'*  
*And that is how they judged Robespierre and Mirabeau!*

*'It is no more under the command of any earthly power,' said L'Estoile, 'to prevent the French people from speaking out, as to bury the sun in the earth or hide it in a hole.'*

There was a swarm of pamphlets and journals, in their thousands; satires and poems, songs from the Actes des Apôtres, answered l'Ami du peuple or the Modérateur of the Royalist Club, written by Fontanes; Mallet-Dupan, in the political section of the Mercure, was opposed to La Harpe and Chamfort in the literary section of the same paper, Champcenetz, the Marquis de Bonnay, Rivarol, Boniface Mirabeau the younger (the Holbein of the sword, who raised the Legion of the Hussards de la Mort, the Black Hussars),

Honoré Mirabeau the elder, when dining, amused themselves by creating caricatures and *the Petit Almanach des grands hommes*: Honoré was on the point of proposing martial law or the seizure of the clergy's possessions. He spent the night with Madame Le Jay after declaring that he would not leave the National Assembly unless faced with bayonets. *Egalité* conferred with the Devil in the quarries of Montrouge, and returned to the garden of Monceaux to preside over orgies of which Laclos was the organizer. The future regicide was no worse than his ancestors: doubly prostituted, debauchery handed him over, exhausted, to ambition. Lauzun, already on the wane, supped in his little house by the Barrière du Maine with dancers from the Opéra, given over to the flatteries of Messieurs de Noailles, de Dillon, de Choiseul, de Narbonne, de Talleyrand and a few other elegant spirits of the day of whom two or three mummies remain among us.

Most of the courtiers, celebrated for their immorality at the end of Louis XV's reign and during that of Louis XVI, were enrolled under the tricolor flag: almost all had been involved with the American War, and had daubed their ribbons with Republican colors. The Revolution employed them as long as they were of mediocre stature; they even became the first generals in its armies. The Duc de Lauzun, romantic lover of the Princess Czartoryska, chaser of women on the highroads, a Lovelace who had had this one, and then had that one, according to the chaste and noble language of the Court, this Duc de Lauzun became Duc de Biron, Commandant in the Vendée for the Convention: how shameful! The Baron de Besenval, blatant liar and cynic regarding the corruption among high society, a horsefly buzzing around the puerilities of the old dying monarchy, this dull Baron compromised by the affair of the Bastille, was saved by Monsieur Necker and by Mirabeau, solely because he was Swiss: how shameful! What had such men to do with such events? As the Revolution advanced, it abandoned with disdain the frivolous apostates of the throne: it had needed their vices, now it required their heads: no blood was scorned, not even that of Madame du Barry.

## BOOK V

### CHAPTER 15

What I did in the midst of all this chaos – My solitary days – Mademoiselle Monet – With Monsieur de Malesherbes I decide on my plan for a voyage to America – Bonaparte and I, unknown second-lieutenants – The Marquis de La Rouërie – I embark at Saint-Malo – Last thoughts on leaving my native land

Paris, December 1821.

The year 1790 completed the measures outlined in 1789. The property of the Church, first placed in the hands of the Nation, was confiscated, the civil constitution of the clergy was decreed, the nobility abolished. I did not attend the Festival of the Federation in July 1790: a fairly serious illness made me keep to my bed; but I was greatly entertained before it by all the wheelbarrows on the Champs-de-Mars. Madame de Staël has described the scene wonderfully well. I will always regret not having seen Monsieur de Talleyrand say Mass assisted by the Abbé Louis, as I regret not having seen him, sabre at his side, grant an audience to the ambassador of the Grand-Turc.

Mirabeau fell from favor in the year 1790; his relationship with the Court was apparent. Monsieur Necker resigned the ministry and retired, without anyone wishing him to stay. Mesdames, the King's aunts, left for Rome on a passport provided by the National Assembly. The Duc d'Orléans, having returned from England, declared himself the most humble and obedient servant of the King. The societies of the Friends of the Constitution, having multiplied beneath the sun, reattached themselves to Paris and the mother-society, from which they received their inspiration and whose orders they executed.

Public life meshed favorably with traits in my character: what was happening publicly attracted me, because I could guard my solitude in the crowd and nothing there assailed my shyness. Moreover the salons, participating in the general movement, became a little less strange to my gaze, and I had, despite myself, made new acquaintances.

The Marquise de Villette lived on my street. Her husband, his reputation tarnished by libel, wrote, as did Monsieur, the King's brother, for the *Journal de Paris*. Madame de Villette, still delightful, lost a sixteen-year old daughter, more delightful than her mother, and for whom the Chevalier de Parny wrote these lines worthy of the [Anthology](#):

'Her soul is Heaven's to keep,  
She has fallen gently asleep,  
Accepting Heaven's decrees:  
So is a smile effaced,  
So dies, without leaving a trace,  
The song of a bird in the trees.'

My regiment, garrisoned at Rouen, preserved its discipline until late. It had engaged with the mob over the execution of the actor [Bordier](#), who suffered the last sentence handed down by the old High Court; hanged the one day, he would have been a hero the next, if only he had lived another twenty-four hours. But, in the end, an insurrection began among the Navarre regiment. The [Marquis de Mortemart](#) emigrated: his officers followed him. I had neither adopted nor rejected the new thinking; as little

disposed to attack them as to serve them, I neither wished to emigrate nor to continue my military career: I resigned my commission.

Free from all ties, I had, on the one hand, quite heated arguments with my brother and Président de Rosambo; and on the other, no less bitter discussions with Ginguené, La Harpe, and Chamfort. Since my early youth, my political impartiality had pleased no one. Moreover, I only attached importance to the questions raised at that time because of common ideas of human liberty and dignity; personally, politics bored me; my true life lay in more exalted regions.

The streets of Paris, crowded with people day and night, no longer permitted me to stroll about them. To find solitude, I fled to the theatre: I settled into the depths of a box, and let my thoughts wander among Racine's verse, the music of Sacchini, or the ballet at the Opéra. I was forced to go barefacedly twenty times in succession to the Italiens, to Barbe-bleue and the Sabot perdu, boring myself in order to prevent boredom, like an owl in some hole in the wall; while the monarchy fell, I heard neither the shattering of age-old arches, nor Mirabeau's voice thundering to the galleries, nor that of Colin singing to Babet about the theatre:

‘Whether its rain, or storm, or snow,  
When nights are long, it helps them go.’

Monsieur Monnet, Inspector-General of Mines, and his young daughter, sent by Madame Ginguené, sometimes came to disturb my savagery: Mademoiselle Monnet seated herself at the front of the box; I sat there before her, half-contented half-miserable. I do not know if she pleased me, if I loved her; but I was very afraid of her. When she left, I missed her, while full of joy at no longer seeing her. However I sometimes went, with sweat on my brow, to find her at her house, to accompany her on her walk: I gave her my arm, and thought for a while I might be hers.

One idea dominated me, that of travelling to the United States: I needed a useful purpose for my journey; I proposed (as I have said in these *Memoirs* and in several of my works) to discover the North-West Passage. This project was in keeping with my poetic nature. No one took any notice of me; I was merely, like Bonaparte, a second-lieutenant then, completely unknown; both of us emerged from obscurity at the same time, I to seek fame in solitude, he to seek glory among men. Now, without attachment to any woman, my sylph still possessed my imagination. I could take pleasure in imagining myself making my way with her through the forests of the New World. Under the influence of a different landscape, my flower of love, my nameless phantom of the Armorican woods, became *Atala* in the shaded groves of Florida.

Monsieur de Malesherbes excited me with the idea of this voyage. I would go to visit him in the mornings: our noses glued to maps, we compared the various charts of the Arctic Circle; we calculated the distance between the Behring Straits and the furthest reaches of Hudson Bay; we read the various narratives of English, Dutch, French, Russian, Swedish and Danish sailors and explorers; we enquired into the land-routes to reach the shores of the Polar Sea; we discussed the difficulties to be surmounted, the precautions needed against the rigors of the climate, the attacks of wild animals, and the lack of food supplies. The great man said: ‘If I were younger, I would go with you, and spare myself the spectacle offered here of crime, treachery and folly. But at my age, one must die where one is. Don't forget to write

to me by every ship, to tell me of your progress and your discoveries: I will make the ministers aware of them. It's a great shame that you know no botany!'

After these conversations I leafed through Tournefort, Duhamel, Bernard de Jussieu, Grew, Jacquin, Rousseau's Dictionary, the elementary Floras; I hurried to the Jardin du Roi, and soon thought myself a second Linnaeus.

At last, in January 1791, I made the decision in all seriousness. Chaos was mounting: it was enough to bear an aristocratic name to be exposed to persecution: the more moderate one's opinions, the more they were a question of conscience, the more one fell under suspicion and was attacked. I resolved to strike camp: I left my brothers and sisters in Paris and headed for Brittany.

At Fougères, I met the Marquis de la Rouërie: I asked him for a letter of introduction to General Washington. *Colonel Armand* (the name given to him in America), had distinguished himself in the American War of Independence. He became famous in France through the Royalist conspiracy which made such touching victims of members of the Désilles family. Having died while organizing the conspiracy, he was exhumed, identified, and so brought ruin on his host and friends. The rival of La Fayette and Lauzun, the predecessor of La Rochejaquelein, the Marquis de la Rouërie possessed more spirit than they had: he had fought more often than the first; he had carried off actresses from the Opera, like the second; he would have become a companion in arms of the third. He used to scour the woods of Brittany, accompanied by an American major, with a monkey perched on his horse's crupper. The law-students at Rennes loved him for his boldness in action and the freedom of his ideas: he had been one of the twelve Breton nobles sent to the Bastille. His figure and manners were elegant, his appearance fashionable, his features charming, and he resembled portraits of young lords of the League.

I chose to embark at Saint-Malo, so as to be able to embrace my mother. I have mentioned in the third book of these Memoirs how I passed through Combourg, and what feelings oppressed me there. I spent two months at Saint-Malo, occupied with preparations for my voyage, as once before for my intended voyage to India.

I struck a bargain with a captain called Desjardins: he had to carry the Abbé Nagot, Superior of the Saint-Sulpice Seminary, to Baltimore, with several seminarists in their principal's care. These companions on the voyage would have been more to my liking four years earlier: from being the zealous Christian I once was, I had become a free thinker, that is to say a feeble thinker. This change in my religious opinions had been brought about by reading philosophical works. I believed, in all good faith, that a religious mind was partially paralyzed, that there were truths which would not occur to it, however superior it might be otherwise. This smug pride led me astray: I inferred in the religious mind the absence of a faculty which is found precisely in the philosophic mind; a limited intelligence thinks it sees all, because it opens its eyes wide; a superior intelligence consents to close its eyes because it sees all within. One final thing completed my misery: the groundless despair I carried in my heart's depths.

A letter from my brother has fixed the date of my departure in my memory: he wrote to my mother from Paris, to announce Mirabeau's death. Three days after his letter arrived I joined my ship in the roads, my luggage already being on board. We weighed anchor, a solemn moment for sailors. The sun was setting



when the coastal pilot left us, after guiding us through the channels. The weather was overcast, the breeze light, and the swell beat heavily against the reefs a few cables' length from our vessel.

My gaze remained fixed on Saint-Malo; I had just left my mother there in floods of tears. I could see the steeples and domes of the churches where I had prayed with Lucile, the walls, ramparts, forts, turrets and sands where I had spent my childhood with Gesril and my other playmates; I was abandoning my shattered country just when she had lost a man whom none could replace. I was departing, uncertain equally of my country's destiny and my own: which of us would perish first, France or I? Would I ever see France or my family again?

A calm halted us at nightfall at the mouth of the roads: the town lights and the beacons were lit: those lights which flickered under my paternal roof seemed at the same moment to smile at me and to bid me farewell, while lighting my way through the rocks, the shadows of night and the blackness of the waves.

I took with me only my youth and my illusions; I was deserting a world whose dust I had trod and whose stars I had counted, for a world where earth and sky were unknown to me. What would have become of me if I had attained the object of my voyage? Roaming the polar shores, the years of discord which have crushed so many generations with so much noise would have fallen silently on my brow; society would have changed its aspect in my absence. It is probable I would never have had the misfortune to write; my name would have remained unknown, or would have only gathered that quiet renown which is less than glory, scorned by envy and left to happiness. Who knows whether I would have re-crossed the Atlantic, or whether I would have settled in the solitary wastes, discovered and explored in risk and peril, like a conqueror among his conquests?

But no, I would return to my native land in order to change the nature of my misfortune, to become there something other than I had been. That sea, in whose lap I was born, would become the cradle of my new life; I was carried by her on my first voyage, as if at my nurse's breast, in the arms of the confidant of my first tears and my first joys.

In the absence of any wind, the ebb-tide carried us out to sea, the lights onshore gradually diminishing and then disappearing. Exhausted by my reflections, vague regrets, and even vaguer hopes, I went below to my cabin: I turned in, rocked in my hammock to the sound of the waves caressing the sides of the ship. The wind rose; the unfurled sails, flapping against the masts, filled, and when I went on deck the following morning one could no longer see French soil.

Here my destiny altered: 'Again to sea!' as Byron sang.

## BOOK VI

### CHAPTER 1

#### Prologue

London, April to September 1822. (Revised December 1846)

Thirty-one years after embarking, as a mere second-lieutenant, for America, I embarked for London with a passport conceived in these terms: ‘Allow passage,’ said this passport, ‘allow passage to His Lordship the Vicomte de Chateaubriand, Peer of France, Ambassador of the King to His Britannic Majesty, etc., etc.’ No description; my grandeur was apparently such as to make my face known everywhere. A steamship, chartered for my sole use, brought me from Calais to Dover. In setting foot on English soil, on the 4th April 1822, I was saluted by the guns of the fort. An officer arrived on behalf of the Commandant to offer me a guard of honor. Reaching the Ship Inn, the landlord and servants received me with bare heads and hanging arms. Madame the Mayoress invited me to a soiree, in the name of the most beautiful ladies of the town. Monsieur Billing, attaché to my embassy, was waiting for me. A dinner of huge fish and monstrous quarters of beef revived Monsieur l’Ambassadeur, who had no appetite and was not in the least tired. The locals, gathered under my windows, filled the air with loud hurrahs. The officer returned, and without asking posted sentries at my door. Next day, after a lavish distribution of my master the King’s money, I set off on the road to London, to the roar of canon, in a light carriage, drawn by four fine horses driven at a lovely trot by two elegant postilions. My staff followed in other coaches; couriers dressed in my livery accompanied the cavalcade. We passed through Canterbury, attracting the eyes of John Bull, and the carriages we overtook. At Blackheath, a common once frequented by highwaymen, I found a newly built village. Soon the immense cap of smoke that covers the city of London appeared.

Plunging into the gulf of dark vapor, as if into one of the mouths of Tartarus, and crossing the whole town, whose streets I recognized, I arrived at the Embassy in Portland Place. The chargé d’affaires, Monsieur le Comte Georges de Caraman, the Embassy secretaries, Monsieur le Vicomte de Marcellus, Monsieur le Baron Élisée Decazes, Monsieur de Bourqueney, and the attachés welcomed me with dignified politeness. All the ushers, porters, valets and footmen of the Embassy were assembled on the pavement. I was handed the cards of the English ministers and foreign ambassadors who had already been informed of my imminent arrival.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May in the year of grace 1793, I had disembarked at Southampton for this same city of London, as an obscure and humble traveler from Jersey. No Mayoress had noticed my arrival; the Mayor of the town, William Smith, gave me, on the 18th, a travel permit for London, to which was attached an extract from the Aliens Bill. My description read as follows: ‘François de Chateaubriand, French officer in the emigrant army, five feet four inches high, thin shape, brown hair and pitted with the smallpox.’ I humbly shared the cheapest of carriages with several sailors on leave; I changed horses at the meanest of inns; I entered poor, ill, and unknown, the rich and famous city where Mr. Pitt reigned; I lodged, at six shillings a month, under the laths of a garret which a Breton cousin had found for me, at the end of a little street off the Tottenham Court Road.

‘Ah! Monseigneur, how your life  
Today, with every honour rife,

Differs from those happy times!’

However a different kind of obscurity has enveloped me in London. My political status has overshadowed my literary fame; there is not a fool in the three kingdoms who has not preferred Louis XVIII’s ambassador to the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme*. We will see how things turn out after my death, or after I have ceased to fill Monsieur the Duc Decazes’ place at the Court of George IV, a succession as strange as the rest of my life.

Since arriving in London as French Ambassador, one of my greatest pleasures has been to leave my carriage at the corner of the street, and wander on foot through the side streets that I once frequented, those poor working-class suburbs, where misfortune takes refuge under the protection of a like suffering, those obscure shelters which I haunted with my companions in distress, not knowing if I would have bread to eat next day, I whose table in 1822 groans under three or four courses. At all of those narrow, humble doors which in the past were open to me, I see only unfamiliar faces. I no longer meet my compatriots in the street, recognizable by their gestures; their walk; the age and style of their clothes; no longer notice those priestly martyrs, wearing their clerical collars; large three-cornered hats; and long threadbare black coats, whom the English would salute as they passed. Wide streets have been cut, lined with palaces, bridges constructed, walkways planted: Regent’s Park, near to Portland Place, occupies the site of the old meadows with their herds of cattle. A cemetery, seen from the window of one of my attic rooms, has vanished within the precincts of a factory. When I go to see Lord Liverpool, I find it hard to discover the place where Charles I’s scaffold stood; new buildings, closing in around the statue of Charles II, have encroached like forgetfulness itself on memorable events.

How I regret, in the midst of my insipid grandeur, that world of tribulation and tears, those times when my sorrows mingled with those of a colony of unfortunates! It is true then that everything changes, that misfortune ends even as prosperity does! What has become of my émigré brothers? Some are dead, others have suffered various fates: they have seen their friends and families vanish; they are less happy in their native country than they were in a foreign land. Had we not, in this country, our reunions, our diversions, our celebrations, above all our youth? Mothers, and young girls beginning their life in adversity, brought home the fruits of their labors, and went to join in some dance of their homeland. Attachments were formed after work, during the evening conversations, on the grass at Hampstead or Primrose Hill. In chapels, decorated by our own hands in old tumbledown buildings, we prayed together on the 21st of January and on the day of the Queen’s death, moved by a funeral oration given by the emigrant priest from our village. We strolled beside the Thames, to watch vessels charged with the world’s riches entering the docks, or to admire the country houses at Richmond, we so poor, we deprived of our paternal roof: all these things were true happiness!

When in 1822 I return home, instead of being met by a friend, shivering with cold, who opens the door of an attic to me familiarly, who beds down on a pallet next to mine, covering himself with a thin coat, with the moonlight for his lamp – I pass between two rows of lackeys, to the light of torches, to reach five or six respectful secretaries. I arrive, riddled with words along the way: Monseigneur, Milord, Your Excellency, Monsieur the Ambassador, at a drawing room draped with gold and silk.

– I beg you, Gentlemen, leave me! A truce to these Milords! What do you wish me to do? Go away, laugh in the Chancery, as if I were not here. Do you imagine you can make me take this masquerade seriously?

Do you think me such a fool as to believe that I have changed my nature because I have changed my coat? The Marquis of Londonderry is coming to visit, you say; the Duke of Wellington has asked for me; Mr. Canning is seeking me; Lady Jersey expects me to dinner with Lord Brougham; Lady Gwydir expects me at ten in her box at the Opera; Lady Mansfield at midnight at Almack's –

Mercy! Where can I hide? Who will deliver me? Who will rescue me from this persecution? Return, you lovely days of misery and solitude! Live once more, companions of my exile! Come, old comrades of pallet and camp-bed, come to the countryside, to the little garden of some quiet tavern, drink a cup of bad tea on a wooden bench and talk of our foolish hopes, and our ungrateful land, speaking of our troubles, searching for ways to help one another, or to succor a relative of ours even more deserving than ourselves.

This is what I have felt, and what I have said to myself in these first days of my London embassy. I can only escape the melancholy that assails me beneath my own roof by saturating myself in the less oppressive melancholy of Kensington Gardens. The gardens have not changed, as I was able to reassure myself in 1843; only the trees have grown; always a solitary place, the birds build their nests here in peace. It is not even the fashion to meet here anymore, as in the days when that loveliest of Frenchwomen, Madame Recamier, walked here accompanied by a throng. From the edge of the deserted lawns of Kensington, I love to watch the files of horses crossing Hyde-Park, and the carriages of fashionable young men, among which in 1822 appears my empty Tilbury, while I, once more the poor little émigré gentleman walk the path where the exiled confessor used to say his breviary.

It was in Kensington Gardens that I planned the Essai Historique; it was there where, re-reading the journal of my travels overseas, I drew on it for the loves of *Atala*; it was there too, after wandering far and wide over the fields under a lowering sky, which turned yellow as if filled with polar light, that I penciled out the first sketch of *René's* passions. At night I deposited the fruit of my daydreams in the *Essai Historique* and *Les Natchez*. The two manuscripts advanced side by side, though I often lacked the money to buy writing paper, and for want of thread fastened the pages together with tacks pulled from the battens in my attic.

The site of my early inspirations commands me to feel its power; it casts the gentle light of my memories over the present: – I feel like taking up my pen once more. So many hours are wasted in embassies! I have no less time than in Berlin to continue my Memoirs, this edifice I am constructing from dead bones and ruins. My secretaries here in London want to go on picnics in the mornings and to balls at night; gladly! The footmen, Peter, Valentine, Lewis, in their turn head for the tavern, and the maids, Rose, Peggy, Maria, go for a walk through the streets; I am delighted. They have left me the key of the outer door: Monsieur the Ambassador remains in charge of the house; if anyone knocks, he will open for them. Everyone has gone; here I am, alone: let us set to work.

It was twenty-two years ago, as I have said, that I sketched out *Les Natchez* and *Atala*; I am at the precise point in my Memoirs at which I sailed for America: it is a perfect fit. Let us erase those twenty-two years, as they have in fact been erased from my life, and set off for the forests of the New World: the story of my Embassy will appear in its proper place, when God pleases; but provided I remain here for a few months, I shall have the time to travel from Niagara Falls to the Army of the Princes in Germany, and from the Army of the Princes to my retreat to England. The Ambassador of the King of France can recount the story of the French émigré in the very place where the latter spent his exile.

BOOK VI  
CHAPTER 2  
**Ocean Passage**

London, April to September 1822.

The previous book ended with my embarkation at Saint-Malo. Soon we left the Channel, and immense waves from the west proclaimed the Atlantic to us.

It is hard for those who have never voyaged to gain an idea of the feelings one experiences on board ship, seeing nothing on every side but the solemn face of the deep. In the perilous life of a sailor there is an independence which is absent on land; one leaves the passions of men behind on shore; between the world one leaves and that which one seeks, one has for friendship and country only the element that supports one: no more duties to fulfil, no more visits to make, no more newspapers, no more politics. Even the language of sailors is no ordinary language: it is a language that speaks of oceans and skies, calms and storms. You inhabit a universe of water among creatures whose clothes, tastes, manners, faces resemble no earth-dwelling people: they possess the hardness of sea wolves and the lightness of birds; there is no trace of the worries of society on their brows; the wrinkles that traverse them resemble the pleats in a furled sail, and are less hollowed out by age than by the wind, as the waves are. The skin of these creatures, impregnated with salt, is reddened, rough as the surface of a reef lashed by the tide.

The sailors have a passion for their vessel; they cry with regret on leaving her, with tenderness on re-embarking. They are unable to remain with their families; after having sworn a hundred times not to expose themselves to the sea, it is impossible for them to ignore it, as a young man cannot tear himself from the arms of a faithless and volatile mistress.

On the dockside in London or Plymouth, it is not unusual to find sailors born on board ship: from infancy to old age, they never go on shore; they never see the land except from their floating cradle, spectators of a world they never enter. In that life reduced to small a space, under the clouds and above the depths, everything is alive to a mariner: an anchor, a sail, a mast, a canon are living things one has affection for and each of which has its history.

The sail was split on the coast of Labrador; the sail-maker added the patch you can see.

The anchor saved the vessel when it had dragged its other anchors, among the coral reefs of the Sandwich Isles.

The mast was broken in a squall off the Cape of Good Hope; it is not a single spar; it is much stronger since it was fashioned from two sections.

The canon is the only one not dismounted at the battle of the Chesapeake.

The news on board is most interesting: the lead has been cast; the ship is making ten knots.

The sky is clear at midday; the sun's elevation has been taken; one is at such and such latitude.

Our position has been established: so many leagues have been gained along our ideal route.

The needle's declination is so many degrees: we are reaching northwards.

The sand in the hourglass flows poorly: we will have rain.

Procellaria, stormy petrels, have been seen behind the vessel's wake: we can expect a sharp gust.

Flying fish have appeared to the south: the weather will be calmer.

A break in the clouds has formed towards the west: it is the source of the wind; tomorrow the wind will blow from that quarter.

The water has changed hue; wood and sea-wrack can be seen floating; sea-gulls and ducks are visible; a little bird came and perched on a yard: the headland must be left behind, since we are nearing shore, and it is a bad idea to berth at night.

In the chicken-coop, there is a favorite cockerel that is sacred, so to speak, and has survived all others; he is famous for having crowed during battle, as if in the farmyard amongst his hens. Below deck a cat lives: its fur streaked with green, with a mangy tail, hairy whiskers, firm on its feet, countering the pitch and roll with its balancing act; it has been round the world twice, and was saved from shipwreck riding on a barrel. The ships'-boys give the cockerel biscuits soaked in wine, and Tomcat has the privilege of sleeping, when it pleases him, on the second captain's fur mantle.

Old sailors resemble old ploughmen. The fruits of their labor are different, it is true; the sailor has led a wandering life, the ploughman has never left his fields; but they both know the stars and predict the future while cutting their furrow. To the one belongs the skylark, the red-breast, the nightingale; to the other the petrel, the curlew, the halcyon – their prophets. They retire for the night, one to his cabin, the other to his cottage; frail habitations, where the hurricane that shakes them has no effect on tranquil consciences.

'If the wind tempestuous is blowing,  
Still no danger they descry;  
The guileless heart its boon bestowing,  
Soothes them with its Lullaby...'

The sailor knows not where death will surprise him, on which shore he will lose his life: perhaps, when he has given his last sigh to the breeze, he will be thrown into the heart of the waves, attached to two oars, to continue his voyage, perhaps he will be cast on some desert island that no one will ever find again, just as he has slumbered alone in his hammock, in the midst of the ocean.

The lone vessel is a fine sight: responding to the lightest touch of the tiller, a hippogriff or winged courser, obedient to the pilot's hand, like a horse under the hand of a rider. The elegance of the masts and rigging, the agility of the sailors as they scramble along the yards, the different aspects in which the ship

presents itself, leaning into a hostile southerly, or fleeing swiftly before a favorable northerly, make this sentient structure one of the wonders of human ingenuity. Now the foaming wave strikes and spurts against the hull; now the peaceful waters divide, without resistance, before the prow. Flags, flames, sails complete the beauty of this palace of Neptune: the lowest sails, deployed to their full width, swell like vast cylinders; the topsails, reefed in the middle, resemble the breasts of a Siren. Animated by an impetuous breeze, the ship with its keel, as with the blade of a plough, cuts with a loud noise through the fields of the sea.

On this pathway through the ocean, along whose length one sees neither tree nor village, town nor turret, spire nor tomb; on this road without signposts or milestones, which has only the waves for markers, only the winds for intermediaries, only the stars for lanterns, the finest of events, when one is not in search of unknown lands and seas, is the meeting of two vessels. Each discovers the other far-off on the horizon; they steer towards each other. The passengers and crew rush to the bridge. The two boats draw near, hoist their flags, and furl their sails to lie parallel. When all is quiet, the two captains, standing on the poop, hail each other with a megaphone: 'What name? Out of what Port? Your captain's name? Where from? How many days crossing? Latitude and longitude? Adieu, away!' They let go a reef; the sail unfurls. The sailors and passengers from the two vessels watch each other depart, without saying a word: these go to seek the sun of Asia; those, the sun of Europe, which will equally oversee their death. Time carries off and separates voyagers on land, still more swiftly than the wind carries them away and separates them on the ocean; they make a sign from afar: Adieu, away! The common harbor is Eternity.

And what if the vessel met with was that of Cook or La Pérouse?

The boatswain of our vessel was an old supercargo named Pierre Villeneuve, whose name itself pleased me because of my own kindly nurse Villeneuve. He had served in India under Bailli de Suffren, and in America under the Comte d'Estaing; he had been involved in countless engagements. Leaning against the bows of the ship, near the bowsprit, like an army veteran sitting beneath a garden trellis in the moat of the Invalides, Pierre, chewing a plug of tobacco that swelled his cheek like a gumboil, described the moment when the decks are cleared, the effect of gunfire below-deck, and the havoc caused by cannonballs ricocheting against the gun-carriages, guns and timber-work. I made him tell me of the Indians, Negroes and planters. I asked him how the people were dressed, about the nature of the trees, the color of earth and sky, the taste of the fruit; whether pineapples were superior to peaches, palm-trees finer than oaks. He explained all this to me by means of comparisons with things I knew: the palm-tree was a giant cabbage, an Indian woman's dress like my grandmother's; camels looked like hunch-backed donkeys; all the peoples of the Orient, especially the Chinese, were cowards and thieves. Villeneuve was a Breton, and we never failed to end by praising the incomparable beauty of our native land.

The bell would interrupt our conversations; it struck the watches, and the hours for dressing, roll-call and meals. In the morning, at a signal, the crew lined up on deck, stripped off their blue shirts, and donned others drying in the shrouds. The discarded shirts were immediately washed in tubs, in which this school of seals also soaped their sunburnt faces and tarry paws.

At the midday and evening meals, the sailors, sitting in a circle round the mess-can, dipped their spoons, one after the other and without cheating, into the soup which splashed about to the rolling of the ship. Those who were not hungry sold their share of biscuit and salt meat to their mates, for a plug of tobacco

or a glass of brandy. The passengers ate in the captain's cabin. When it was fine, a sail was spread above the stern, and we ate with a view of the blue sea, flecked here and there with white marks where it was stirred by the breeze.

Wrapped in my cloak, I stretched out at night on deck. My eyes contemplated the stars above. The swollen sail conveyed the coolness of the breeze to me, which rocked me beneath the celestial dome: half-asleep and driven onwards by the wind, the sky changed with my changing dreams.

The passengers on board ship offer an alternative society to that of the crew: they belong to another element; their destinies are earthbound. Some hasten to seek their fortunes, others rest; those return to their homeland, these leave theirs behind; still others voyage to research the ways of other peoples, to study the sciences and the arts. One has the leisure to learn in this floating hotel that travels with the traveler, to hear of many things, to conceive antipathies, and contract friendships. When those young women come and go, born of English and Indian blood, who combine the beauty of Clarissa and the delicacy of Sakuntala, then those necklaces are formed which knot and un-knot the perfumed breezes of Ceylon, as light and gentle as they are themselves.



## BOOK VI

### CHAPTER 3

Francis Tulloch – Christopher Columbus - Camoëns

London, April to September 1822.

Among my fellow-passengers was a young Englishman. Francis Tulloch had served in the artillery; painter, musician and mathematician, he spoke several languages. The Abbé Nagot, the Superior of the *Sulpiciens*, had met the Anglican officer and made him a true Catholic: he was taking his neophyte to Baltimore.

I befriended Tulloch: as I was a convinced free-thinker at that time, I urged him to return to his parents. The sight we had before our eyes aroused his admiration. We would rise at night, when the deck was given over to the officer of the watch and a few sailors silently smoking their pipes: *Tuta aequora* - silent: the sea calm and silent. The ship rolled at the mercy of the slow and noiseless waves, while sparks of fire coursed with the white foam along her sides. Thousands of stars shining in the sombre azure of the celestial dome, a shore-less sea, infinity in the sky and on the waters! God never impressed me with his greatness more than in those nights when I had immensity over my head and immensity under my feet.

Westerly winds, interspersed with calms, delayed our progress. By the 4th of May we had got no farther than the Azores. On the 6th, at about eight in the morning, we caught sight of the island of Pico; this volcano long dominated unknown seas: a vain beacon by night, an unseen landmark by day.

There is something magical in the sight of land rising from the depths of the sea. Christopher Columbus, in the midst of his mutinous crew, ready to return to Europe without having achieved the purpose of his voyage, saw a little light, on a beach hidden from him by the night. The flight of birds had guided him towards America; the glow from a savage hearth revealed a new universe to him. Columbus must have experienced the kind of feeling that Scripture grants to the Creator, when, having drawn the earth from nothingness, he saw that his work was good: *vidit Deus quod esset bonum*. Columbus created a world. One of the first *lives* of the Genoan navigator is that which Giustiniani, in publishing his Hebrew *Psalter*, placed as a note beneath the psalm: *Caeli emigrant gloriam dei*: the Heavens declare the glory of God.

Vasco da Gama must have been no less amazed, when in 1498 he touched the coast of Malabar. Then, everything in the world altered: nature appeared anew; the curtain, which had hidden part of the earth for thousands of centuries, lifted: the house of the sun was discovered, the place from which he rose each morning 'like a bridegroom, or a giant, *tanquam sponsus, ut gigas*'. The wise and gleaming Orient was seen in all its nakedness, that Orient whose mysterious history involved the voyages of Pythagoras, the conquests of Alexander, the memory of the Crusades, and whose perfumes crossed the deserts of Arabia and the seas of Greece to reach us. Europe sent a poet there to praise it: the swan of the Tagus sounded his sad and beautiful voice on the shores of India; Camoëns borrowed their brilliance, their renown and their misfortune; he only left them their riches.

## BOOK VI

### CHAPTER 4

Francis Tulloch – Christopher Columbus - Camoëns

When Gonçalo Velho, Camoëns' maternal grandfather, discovered part of the Azores archipelago, he should, if he had foreseen the future, have reserved a six foot plot of earth to cover the bones of his grandson.

We anchored in a poor roadstead with a rocky bottom, in forty-five fathoms of water. The island of Graciosa, in front of which we moored, displayed hills swelling a little in outline like the ellipses of an Etruscan amphora: they were draped in the green of their cornfields, and gave off a pleasant odor of wheat peculiar to the harvests of the Azores. In the midst of these tapestries we could see the boundaries of the fields, formed of volcanic stone, half-black and half-white, and piled one on top of another. An abbey, monument of an old world on new soil, crowned the summit of a mound; at the foot of this mound, the red roofs of the town of Santa Cruz were mirrored in a pebbly creek. The whole island, with its indentations of bays, capes, coves and promontories, replicated its inverted landscape in the sea. As an outer defense it had a girdle of rocks jutting vertically from the waves. In the background, the volcanic cone of Pico, planted on a cupola of clouds, pierced the aerial perspective beyond Graciosa.

It was decided that I should go ashore with Tulloch and the mate; the longboat was lowered into the water: it was rowed to the shore which was about two miles away. We saw some movement on the beach; a flat-bottomed boat advanced towards us. As soon as it was within earshot, we made out a number of monks on board. They hailed us in Portuguese, Italian, English and French, and we replied in all four languages. The alarm bell was ringing: our vessel was the first large sailing ship that had ventured to anchor in the dangerous roadstead where we were riding the tide. What is more, the islanders were seeing a tricolor flag for the first time: they wondered if we were corsairs from Algiers or Tunis! Neptune had not recognized the standard carried so proudly by Cybele. When they saw we had human forms, and understood what was said to us, their joy was extreme. The monks helped us into their boat, and we rowed gaily towards Santa Cruz: we landed there with some difficulty, because of the violence of the surf.

The whole island ran to meet us. Four or five *alguazils* (Portuguese warrant-officers), armed with rusty pikes, took charge of us. The uniform of His Majesty attracted the honors in my direction, and I was taken for the most important member of the delegation. We were escorted to the Governor's residence, a hovel, where His Excellency wearing a shabby green uniform, which had once possessed gold lace, granted us solemn audience: he gave us permission to re-victual.

The monks took us to their monastery, a roomy well-lit building with balconies. Tulloch had found a fellow countryman: the principal brother, who did everything to accommodate us, was a sailor from Jersey, whose ship had gone down with all hands off Graciosa. Sole survivor of the wreck, and not lacking in intellect, he had become a willing pupil of the catechists; he had learnt Portuguese and a few words of Latin; his English origins had told in his favor, they had converted him and made a monk of him. The sailor from Jersey found it much more to his liking to be lodged, clothed and boarded at the altar than to climb the rigging to take in the mizzen topsail. He still remembered his former trade: since it was

a long time since he had heard his language spoken, he was delighted to meet someone who understood it; he laughed and swore like a true acolyte. It was he who showed us over the island.

The houses in the villages, built of wood and stone, were adorned with outer galleries which gave a clean look to these huts because they let in a great deal of light. The peasants, nearly all of them vine-growers, were half-naked, and bronzed by the sun; the women, small and yellow-skinned like mulattoes, but lively, were naively coquettish with their bouquets of mock-orange, and their rosaries worn as coronets or necklaces.

The hillsides were covered with vine-stocks, the wine obtained from which resembled that of Fayal. Water was scarce, but wherever a spring welled a fig tree grew and there was an oratory with a portico painted in fresco. The arches of the portico framed views of the island and the sea. It was on one of these fig trees I saw a flock of blue teal settle, a species lacking webbed feet. The tree had no leaves, but it bore red fruit set like crystals. When it was adorned with the cerulean birds, with wings at rest, its fruits appeared bright crimson, while the tree seemed to have suddenly sent out azure foliage.

It is likely that the Azores were known to the Carthaginians; certainly Phoenician coins have been uncovered on the island of Corvo. They say that the modern navigators who first landed on the island found an equestrian statue, the right arm extended and pointing towards the west, if, that is, the statue is not merely the engraved design which decorates ancient prints of harbors.

I have it, in the manuscript of *Les Natchez*, that Chactas returning from Europe touched land at the island of Corvo, and that he there encountered the mysterious statue. He expresses the feelings which filled me on Graciosa, recalling the legend: *'I approached this extraordinary monument. On its base, bathed with foam from the waves, unknown characters were engraved: the moisture and saltpeter of the waters had eaten into the surface of the ancient bronze; the Halcyon, perched on the helmet of the colossus, uttered, at intervals, languid cries; mollusks had stuck to its sides and in its steed's bronze mane, and when one approached the grooves of its flaring nostrils, one imagined one heard confused rumors.'*

A good supper was served to us by the monks, after our excursion; we spent the night drinking with our hosts. Next day, about noon, our stores having been loaded, we returned on board. The monks were entrusted with our letters for Europe. The ship had been placed in danger by a strong south-westerly which had risen. We weighed anchor: but it was caught and lost among the rocks as anticipated. We set sail; the wind continued to freshen, and soon we left the Azores behind.

## BOOK VI

### CHAPTER 5

Ocean customs – The Island of Saint-Pierre

London, April to September 1822.

*‘Fac pelagus me scire probes, quo carbasa laxo: Muse, help me show how I know this sea where I deploy my sail.’*

Those are the words of Guillaume le Breton, my compatriot, six hundred years ago. At sea again, I began to contemplate its solitudes once more; but across the ideal world of my reveries, like stern instructors, France and real events passed. My daily retreat, when I wished to evade the other passengers, was the maintop; I climbed to it nimbly to the applause of the sailors. I sat there overlooking the waves.

Space laid out in dual azure had the look of a canvas ready to receive some great painter’s imminent creation. The color of the waves was like liquid glass. Broad and deep undulations appeared in their ravines, escaping from sight in the deserts of the Ocean: those quivering landscapes made the comparison meaningful to me that Scripture draws between the Earth reeling before the Lord, and a drunken man. Sometimes, one would have said that space was narrow and bounded, without projecting points; but if a wave chanced to raise its head, the flood curved in imitation of a distant shore, until a school of dog-fish swam past on its horizon, so creating a scale of measurement. Its expanse revealed itself, especially when mist, creeping over the pelagian surface, seemed to increase its immensity even further.

Descending from the mast’s eyrie, as I once used to descend from my nest in the willow-tree, forever constrained to my solitary existence, I would eat a ship’s biscuit, and a little sugar and lemon; then, I would lie down to sleep, on deck wrapped in my cloak, or below deck in my bunk: I had only to stretch my arm to reach from my bed to my coffin.

The wind forced us northwards and we made the Banks of Newfoundland. Floating icebergs were drifting in the midst of a pale cold drizzle.

The men of the trident have customs handed down to them by their predecessors: when you cross the Line, you must resign yourself to receiving baptism; the same ceremony takes place in the Tropics as on the Banks of Newfoundland, and wherever the location, the leader of the masque is always the Old Man of the Tropics. Tropical and dropsical are synonymous terms to sailors: so the Old Man of the Tropics has an enormous paunch; he is dressed, even when he is in his native Tropics, in all the sheepskins and fur jackets the crew can muster. He squats in the maintop, giving a roar every now and then. Everybody gazes up at him: he starts to clamber down the shrouds, clumsy as a bear, stumbling like Silenus. As he sets foot on deck, he utters fresh roars, gives a bound, seizes a pail, fills it with sea-water, and empties it over the heads of those who have never crossed the Equator or never reached the latitude of icebergs. You may flee below deck, leap onto the hatches, or climb the masts: the Old Man pursues you; they end with a generous tip, these games of Amphitrite, that Homer would have celebrated, just as he sang of Proteus, if old Oceanus had been known in his entirety in Ulysses’ time; but at that time only his head was visible at the Pillars of Hercules; his body, hidden, covered the world.

We steered for the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, seeking a new port of call. When we approached the former, one morning between ten and midday, we were almost on top of it; its coast showed like a black hump through the mist.

We anchored in front of the capital of the island: we could not see it but we could hear the noises onshore. The passengers hastened to disembark; the Superior of Saint-Sulpice, continuously plagued by seasickness, was so feeble he had to be carried to land. I took lodgings apart from the others; I waited for a squall to blow away the fog, and show me the place I inhabited, and the faces so to speak of my hosts in this country of shadows.

The port and roadstead of Saint-Pierre are set between the east coast of the island and an elongated islet called the *Île aux Chiens*, the Isle of Dogs. The port, known as the Barachois, stretches inland and ends in a brackish pool. Some barren rounded hills are crowded together in the center of the island: one or two, standing apart, overhang the sea; the rest have a fringe of levelled peaty moor-land at their feet. The lookout hill can be seen from the town.

The Governor's house faces the wharf. The church, the rectory, the Chandler's shop are all in the same area; next there are the houses of the naval commissioner and the harbor-master. Then the town's only street begins, which runs across the pebbles along the beach.

I dined with the Governor two or three times, an extremely polite and obliging officer. He grew European vegetables on the hillside. After dinner he showed me what he called his garden.

A sweet and delicate scent of heliotrope rose from a small bed of flowering beans; it was not wafted to us by a breeze from home, but by a wild Newfoundland wind, unrelated to that exiled plant, and lacking the kindness of reminiscence and delight. In this perfume, no longer breathed in by beauty, purified in its breast, nor diffused in its wake, in this perfume of another dawn, another world, another culture, was all the melancholy of regret, absence, youth.

From the garden, we ascended the hills, and halted at the foot of the flagpole in front of the lookout. The new French flag floated over our heads; like Virgil's women we gazed at the sea, *flentes*, in tears. It separated us from our native land! The Governor was troubled; he belonged to the defeated side; moreover he was bored in this retreat, which was fine for a dreamer like me, but a harsh abode for a man interested in public affairs, unaffected by that all-absorbing passion which can banish the rest of the world from sight. My host enquired about the Revolution, while I asked him for news of the North-West Passage. He was at the edge of the wilderness, but he knew nothing of Eskimos and received nothing from Canada but partridges.

One morning, I went alone to the Cap-à-l'Aigle, to see the sun rise in the direction of France. There, a glacial stream formed a waterfall whose last leap reached the sea. I sat on a rocky ledge, feet dangling over the water that foamed at the base of the cliff. A young fisher-girl appeared on the upper slopes of the hill; she had bare legs, despite the cold, and was walking through the dew. Tufts of her dark hair showed through from under the Indian kerchief in which her head was bound; over this kerchief she wore a hat made of local reeds shaped like a boat or a cradle. A bunch of purple heather showed at her breast which was outlined by the white fabric of her chemise. From time to time she stooped to gather the leaves of an

aromatic plant known in the islands as natural tea. With one hand she dropped these leaves into a basket which she held in the other. She saw me: unafraid, she came to sit beside me, with her basket next to her, and began watching the sun as I was, her legs dangling above the sea.

We remained without speaking for a few minutes; at last, I showed myself the bolder, and said: 'What are you gathering, there? The season for blueberries and cranberries is over.' She raised two large dark eyes, shyly and proudly, and replied: 'I was picking tea.' She showed me her basket. 'You are taking the tea home to your mother and father? – My father is away fishing with Guillaumy. – What do you do on this island in winter? – We make nets, we fish the lakes by breaking holes in the ice; on Sundays, we go to Mass and Vespers, where we sing hymns; and then we play in the snow and watch the boys hunting polar bears. – Will your father be back soon? –

Oh, no! The captain is taking the boat to Genoa with Guillaumy. – But Guillaumy will be back? – Oh, yes! Next season, when the fishermen return, amongst his novelties, he is going to bring me a striped silk bodice, a muslin petticoat, and a black necklace. – And you will be adorned for the wind, the mountain and the sea. Would you like me to send you a bodice, a petticoat and a necklace? – Oh, no!'

She rose, took up her basket, and ran down a steep path, beside a fir-grove. She was singing a Mission hymn in a sonorous voice:

'All burning with immortal ardor,  
It is toward God my wishes tend.'

On her way she scattered some lovely birds called egrets because of the tufts on their heads; she looked as though she was one of their number. Reaching the sea, she leaped into a boat, loosed the sail, and sat down at the rudder; one might have taken her for Fortune: she sailed away from me.

Oh, yes! Oh, no, Guillaumy! The image of the young sailor out on a yard, in the midst of the wind, changed the dreadful rock of Saint-Pierre into a land of delights:

*'L'isola di Fortuna ora vedete:* Now you may see the Fortunate Isles.'

We spent fifteen days on the island. From its desolate shores one can see the even more desolate coast of Newfoundland. The hills inland extend in divergent chains, of which the most elevated stretches north towards Rodrigue Bay. In the valleys, granite rock, containing red and greenish mica, is colonized by mats of sphagnum moss, lichen, and broom mosses (dicranum).

Small lakes are fed by the inflow of streams from La Vigie, Le Courval, Le Pain de Sucre, Le Kergariou, and La Tête Galante. These pools are known as Les Étangs du Savoyard, Le Cap Noir, Le Ravenel, Le Colombier, and Le Cap à l'Aigle. When gusts of wind stir these lakes they divide the shallows laying bare here and there stretches of drowned meadowland which are suddenly hidden again by the re-woven veil of water.

The flora of Saint-Pierre is like that of Lapland and the Straits of Magellan. The count of plant species diminishes towards the Pole; at Spitsbergen, one finds less than forty species of flowering plant

(phanerogams). Species of plants vanish with changing location: northern ones, growing on the frozen steppes, become in the south the offspring of mountains only; others, nourished by the calm atmosphere of the densest forests, decreasing in height and strength, die on storm-tossed ocean shores. On Saint-Pierre, the marsh blueberry (vaccinium fuliginosum) is reduced to the state of knotgrass; it is soon lost in the wads and pads of moss that serve as humus. A wandering plant, I have made my own preparations for merging into the seacoast where I was born.

The slopes of the hillocks on Saint-Pierre are clothed with balsam fir, amelanchier, gaultheria, larch, and black fir, whose buds are used to produce anti-scorbutic ale. These 'trees' do not exceed the height of a man. The ocean winds pollard them, rock them, and bend them like ferns; then gliding beneath these forests of undergrowth, raise them again; but it finds no trunks, branches, arches, no echo of its moaning and makes no more noise there than it does over a moor.

These stunted woods contrast with the tall woods of Newfoundland on the neighboring shore, whose firs carry silvery lichen (alecatoria trichodes): the polar bears seem to have snagged their fur on the branches of these trees, making strange climbers of themselves. The swamps of that island, explored by Jacques Cartier, reveal paths trodden by these bears: you think you are looking at the rural tracks round a sheep-fold. The calls of hungry creatures sound all night; the traveler is only reassured by the no less sad sound of the sea; those waves, so harsh and unsociable, become friends and companions.

The northern tip of Newfoundland is at the same latitude as Labrador's Cape Charles; a few degrees higher the Polar landscape begins. If we are to believe the travelers, there is a charm to these regions: in the evening, the sun, touching the earth, seems to halt motionless, and soon climbs the sky again instead of dropping below the horizon. The mountains covered in snow, the valleys embroidered with white moss browsed by the reindeer, the seas full of whales and dotted with icebergs, the whole landscape glowing as if illumined simultaneously by the fires of the setting sun and the light of dawn: one does not know if one is present at the beginning of the world or its end. A little bird, similar to one which sings at night in our own woodlands, makes his plaintive song heard. Then love draws the Eskimo onto the frozen rocks where his companion waits: these human nuptials, at the ends of the earth, are not lacking in joy or ceremony.

## BOOK VI

### CHAPTER 6

Ocean customs – The Island of Saint-Pierre

London, April to September 1822.

After taking on provisions and replacing the anchor lost at Graciosa, we left Saint-Pierre. Sailing south, we reached 38 degrees latitude. We were becalmed not far off the coasts of Maryland and Virginia. The misty skies of the northern regions had been succeeded by the clearest of skies; we could not see land, but the odor of the pine-forests reached us. Daybreak and dawn, sunrise and sunset, dusk and nightfall were all admirable. I was never weary of gazing at Venus, whose rays seemed to envelop me as my sylph's tresses had long ago.

One evening, I was reading in the captain's cabin; the bell sounded for prayers: I went to add my vows to those of my companions. The officers occupied the poop with the passengers; the chaplain, book in hand, was a little way from us near the tiller: we were standing, facing the prow of the vessel. All the sails were furled.

The sun's disc, ready to plunge into the waves, appeared amongst the rigging in the midst of boundless space: one would have said, because of the motion of the ship, that the radiant star altered its relationship to the horizon each instant. When I drew this picture, which you can re-read in its entirety, in *Le Génie du Christianisme*, my religious sentiments were in harmony with the scene; but, alas, when I was there in person, the unconverted man was alive in me! It was not God alone whom I contemplated above the waves in the magnificence of his works. I saw an unknown woman and the miracle of her smile; the beauties of the heavens seemed born from her breath; I would have given eternity for one of her caresses. I imagined that she was throbbing behind that veil of the universe which hid her from my eyes. Oh! If it had only been in my power to tear away that curtain and press that ideal woman to my heart, and be consumed on her breast in that love, the source of my inspiration, my despair and my existence! While I was indulging in these impulses so fitting to my future career as a trapper, it nearly happened that an accident put an end to my dreams and plans.

The heat was overpowering; the vessel, in a dead calm, and weighed down by its masts, was rolling heavily: roasting on deck and wearied by the motion of the ship I decide to bathe, and though we had no boat out, I dived from the bowsprit into the sea. All went well to begin with, and several passengers followed my example. I swam about without glancing at the ship; but when I chanced to turn my head, I saw that the current had carried her some way off. The sailors, alarmed by this, had thrown a rope to the other swimmers. Sharks appeared in the ship's wake, and shots were fired at them to scare them off. The swell was so heavy, that it prevented my return, while exhausting my strength. There was a whirlpool beneath me, and at any moment the sharks might have made off with an arm or a leg. On board, the boatswain tried to lower a boat into the sea, but the tackle had to be rigged first, and this took a considerable time.

By the greatest good luck, an almost imperceptible breeze sprang up; the ship, answering a little to the helm, approached me; I was able to catch the end of the rope; but my companions in foolhardiness were already clinging to it; when we were dragged to the ship's side, I was at the end of the line, and they bore



down on me with all their weight. They fished us up in this way one by one, which took a long time. The rolling continued; at every alternate roll, we plunged six or seven feet in the water, or were suspended as many feet in the air, like fish on the end of a line: at the last immersion I felt as I were about to faint; one more roll, and it would have been all over. I was hoisted on deck half-dead: if I had been drowned, what good riddance for me and everyone else!

Two days after this incident, we were in sight of land. My heart beat wildly when the captain pointed it out to me: America! It was barely indicated by the tops of a few maple trees above the horizon. The palm-trees at the mouth of the Nile have indicated the shores of Egypt to me since, in the same way. A pilot came on board; we entered Chesapeake Bay. That evening a boat was sent ashore to obtain fresh provisions. I joined the party and soon trod American soil.

Casting my gaze around me, I remained motionless for a few moments. This continent, possibly unknown to both ancient times and a series of modern centuries; the first savage destiny of that continent, and its second destiny since the arrival of Christopher Columbus; the supremacy of the European monarchies shaken by this new world; an old social order ending in this young America; a republic of a new kind announcing a change in the human spirit; the part my country had played in these events; the seas and shores owing their independence in part to French blood and the French flag; a great man issuing from the midst of wilderness and discord; Washington at home in a flourishing city, on the same spot where William Penn had bought a patch of forest; the United States passing to France that Revolution which France had supported with her arms; lastly my own plans, the virgin muse I had come here to deliver to the passion of a new Nature; the discoveries I hoped to make in the deserts that still extended their vast kingdom behind the limited rule of a foreign civilization: such were the thoughts that revolved in my mind.

We walked towards a house. Woods of balsam and Virginian cedar, mocking-birds and cardinal tanagers proclaimed, by their shade and appearance, their song and color, another clime. The house, which we reached after half-an-hour, was a mixture of English farm house and Creole hut. Herds of European cattle grazed in pasture land enclosed by fencing on which striped squirrels were playing. Black people were sawing timber, whites were tending tobacco plants. A Negress, thirteen or fourteen years old, almost naked and singularly beautiful, opened the gate of the enclosure for us like a young Night. We bought some maize cakes, chickens, eggs and milk, and returned to the ship with our baskets and demijohns. I gave my silk handkerchief to the little African girl: it was a slave who welcomed me to the land of liberty.

We weighed anchor to head for the roads and port of Baltimore: approaching them the waters narrowed; they were smooth and still; we seemed to be sailing up an indolent river lined with Avenues. Baltimore appeared as if it lay at the far end of a lake. Facing the town was a wooded hill, at the foot of which they were beginning to build. We moored alongside the quay. I slept on board and did not go ashore till the next day. I went with my luggage to the inn; the seminarists retired to the establishment prepared for them, from which they have since scattered throughout America.

What became of Francis Tulloch? The following letter was delivered to me in London, on the 12th of April 1822:

*'Thirty years have passed, my dear Viscount, since the era of our voyage to Baltimore, and it's quite possible you have even forgotten my name; but if I trust to the sentiments of my heart, which have always remained loyal and true to you, it is not so, and I flatter myself you would not be unhappy at seeing me once more. Though we live opposite one another (as you will see from the address of my letter), I am only too well aware how many things separate us. But witness the least desire to see me, and I will be happy to prove to you, as far as I can, that I am still as I have always been, your faithful and devoted,*

*Francis Tulloch'*

*P.S. The distinguished rank you have achieved and which has conferred on you so many titles is before my eyes; but the memory of the Chevalier de Chateaubriand is so dear to me, that I cannot write to you (at least on this occasion) as Ambassador etc., etc. So, forgive the style for the sake of our old friendship.*

*Friday 12th April,  
Portland Place, No. 30'*

So Tulloch was in London; he did not become a priest at all, he is married; his adventures have ended like mine. The letter weighs in favor of the truth of my *Memoirs* and the accuracy of my memories. Who could have evidenced an alliance and friendship formed thirty years ago at sea, if the other party had not reappeared? And what a sad backward perspective this letter unrolls! Tulloch, in 1822, lived in the same city as me, in the very same street; the door of his house faced mine, just as we met on the same vessel, on the same deck, our cabins facing one another. How many other friends of mine I shall never see again! Every night as he goes to his rest, a man can count his losses: only his years never leave him, even though they pass; when he reviews them and calls their numbers, they reply: 'Present!' Not one fails the call.

## BOOK VI

### CHAPTER 7

Philadelphia – General Washington

London, April to September 1822.

Baltimore, like all the other capitals of the United States, did not then possess its present extent: it was a pretty little Catholic town, ordered and lively, whose social mores bore a close resemblance to those of Europe. I paid the captain my passage-money, and gave him a farewell dinner. I booked my seat in a stage-coach which made the journey to Pennsylvania three times a week. At four in the morning I climbed in, and found myself rolling along the highways of the New World.

The route we followed, more marked out than made, crossed fairly flat country: there were hardly any trees, few farms, and scattered villages, the climate being French, with swallows flying over the water as they did over the pond at Combourg.

Near Philadelphia, we met farm-workers going to market, and public and private carriages. Philadelphia struck me as a fine town, with wide streets, some planted with trees, intersecting at right-angles in a regular pattern, north-south, and east-west. The Delaware River runs parallel to the street which follows its west bank. This river would be regarded as considerable in Europe: in America they barely mention it; its banks are low, and not picturesque.

At the time of my journey in 1791, Philadelphia had not yet been extended as far as the Schuylkill River; the ground, in the direction of that tributary, was divided into lots, on which houses were being built here and there.

Philadelphia's appearance is monotonous. In general, what are lacking in the Protestant cities of the United States are great works of architecture: the Reformation, young in years, sacrificing nothing to the imagination, has rarely erected those domes, airy naves, and twin spires with which the Catholic religion has garlanded Europe. Not one monument in Philadelphia, New York, or Boston, soars above the mass of roofs and walls: the eye is saddened by this uniform level.

First putting up at an inn, I later took a room in a boarding-house where San Domingo planters, and Frenchmen who had emigrated, possessing other ideas than mine, lodged. A land of liberty offered asylum to those fleeing from liberty: nothing proves the high worth of generous institutions more than this voluntary exile of the supporters of absolute power to a pure democracy.

Anyone, arriving like myself in the United States, full of enthusiasm for the people of classical times, a Cato, seeking everywhere the severity of early Roman life, was bound to be shocked by the luxurious carriages, the frivolous conversation, the inequality of wealth, the immorality of the banks and gaming houses, and the noisy ballrooms and theatres. In Philadelphia I could easily have thought myself in Liverpool or Bristol. The people there were attractive: the Quaker girls with their grey dresses, their uniform little bonnets, and their pale faces, looked lovely.

At that stage of my life, I had a great admiration for Republics, though I did not consider them achievable in the era we had reached: I thought of liberty after the manner of the ancients, or liberty as the daughter of the methods of a new-born society; but I knew nothing of liberty as the child of enlightenment and an old civilization, liberty which the representative republic has shown to be a reality: God grant it may prove durable! It is no longer necessary to plough one's own small field, to curse the arts and sciences, or to have pointed nails and a dirty beard to be free.

When I arrived in Philadelphia, General Washington was not available; I was obliged to wait a week to see him. I saw him go by in a carriage drawn by prancing horses, driven four-in-hand. Washington, according to my ideas at the time, was of course Cincinnatus; Cincinnatus in a chariot, clashed a little with my Republic of the Roman year 296. Should the dictator Washington be other than a rustic, prodding his oxen with a goad, while grasping the handle of his plough? But when I went to him with my letter of recommendation, I rediscovered the simplicity of the ancient Romans.

A small house, resembling the neighboring houses, was the palace of the President of the United States: no sentries, not even any footmen. I knocked; a young maidservant opened the door. I asked her if the General was at home; she told me he was. I replied that I had a letter to deliver to him. The maid asked my name, which is difficult to pronounce in English, and which she could not master. Then she said softly: 'Walk in, sir,' and led the way along one of those narrow corridors which serve as entrance-halls in English houses: she showed me into a parlor where she asked me to wait for the General.

I was not greatly moved: greatness of soul or fortune do not impress me; I admire the former without being overawed; the latter fills me more with pity than respect: no man's face will ever disturb me.

After a few minutes, the General entered: tall in stature, with a calm, cool air rather than one of nobility, he looked like his portraits. I handed him my letter in silence; he opened it, going straight to the signature which he read aloud, exclaiming: 'Colonel Armand!' This was the name he knew him by, and with which the Marquis de la Rouërie had signed the letter.

We were seated. I explained to him as best I could the motive for my journey. He replied in monosyllables in English and French, and listened to me with a kind of astonishment; I noticed this, and said to him with a degree of vivacity: 'But it is less difficult to discover the North-West passage than to create a nation as you have done.' – 'Well, well, young man!' he exclaimed, giving me his hand. He invited me to dinner on the following day, and we parted.

I took good care to be there. We were only five or six guests. The conversation turned to the French Revolution. The General showed us a key from the Bastille. These keys, as I have already remarked, were foolish toys which were widely distributed. Three years later, the exporters of locksmiths' wares could have sent the President of the United States the bolt from the prison of that monarch who gave France and America liberty. If Washington had seen the conquerors of the Bastille in the gutters of Paris, he would have had less respect for his relic. The seriousness and force of the Revolution did not derive from its bloody orgies. At the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685, the same populace from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine demolished the Protestant church at Charenton, with the same zeal with which they devastated the church of Saint-Denis in 1793.

I left my host at ten in the evening, and never met him again; he departed the next day, and I continued my travels.

Such was my meeting with the soldier-citizen, the liberator of the world. Washington descended into his grave before even a little fame attached itself to my footsteps; I came before him as the most insignificant of beings; he was in all his glory, I in all my obscurity; my name may not even have lingered a day in his memory: though I am happy that his gaze should have rested on me! I have felt warmed by it for the rest of my life: there is a virtue in the gaze of a great man.

## BOOK VI

### CHAPTER 8

#### Comparison of Washington and Bonaparte

Bonaparte is not long dead. Since I have come knocking on Washington's door, the parallel between the founder of the United States and the Emperor of the French naturally springs to mind; even more appropriately, at the moment I trace these lines, Washington himself is no more. Ercilla, fighting and singing in Chile, stopped in the midst of his journey to tell of the death of Dido; I halt at the beginning of my travels, in Pennsylvania, in order to compare Washington and Bonaparte. I would rather not have concerned myself with them until the point where I had met Napoleon; but if I came to the edge of my grave without having reached the year 1814 in my tale, no one would then know anything of what I would have written concerning these two representatives of Providence. I remember Castelnau: like me Ambassador to England, who wrote like me a narrative of his life in London. On the last page of Book VII, he says to his son: '*I will deal with this event in Book VIII*,' and Book VIII of Castelnau's *Memoirs* does not exist: that warns me to take advantage of being alive.

Washington did not belong, as Bonaparte did, to that race of beings that exceed human stature. There was nothing astonishing about him; he was not placed in a vast theatre; he did not deal with the most able generals and the most powerful monarchs of his time: he did not speed from Memphis to Vienna, from Cadiz to Moscow: he acted defensively with a handful of citizens in a land not yet famous, within a narrow circle of domestic hearths. He did not give himself over to battles that recalled the triumphs of Arbela and Pharsalus; he did not overthrow thrones in order to create others from their ruins; he never said to kings at his door:

*'That they were long overdue, and that Attila was bored.'*

A degree of silence envelops Washington's actions; he moved slowly; one might say that he felt charged with future liberty, and that he feared to compromise it. It was not his own destiny that inspired this new species of hero: it was that of his country; he did not allow himself to enjoy what did not belong to him; but from that profound humility what glory emerged! Search the woods where Washington's sword gleamed: what do you find? Tombs? No; a world! Washington has left the United States behind for a monument on the field of battle.

Bonaparte shared no trait with that serious American: he fought amidst thunder in an old world; he thought about nothing but creating his own fame; he was inspired only by his own fate. He seemed to know that his project would be short, that the torrent which falls from such heights flows swiftly; he hastened to enjoy and abuse his glory, like fleeting youth. Following the example of Homer's gods, in four paces he reached the ends of the world. He appeared on every shore; he wrote his name hurriedly in the annals of every people; he threw royal crowns to his family and his generals; he hurried through his monuments, his laws, his victories. Leaning over the world, with one hand he deposed kings, with the other he pulled down the giant, Revolution; but, in eliminating anarchy, he stifled liberty, and ended by losing his own on his last field of battle.

Each was rewarded according to his efforts: Washington brings a nation to independence; a justice at peace, he falls asleep beneath his own roof in the midst of his compatriots' grief and the veneration of nations.

Bonaparte robs a nation of its independence: deposed as emperor, he is sent into exile, where the world's anxiety still does not think him safely enough imprisoned, guarded by the Ocean. He dies: the news proclaimed on the door of the palace in front of which the conqueror had announced so many funerals, neither detains nor astonishes the passer-by: what have the citizens to mourn?

Washington's Republic lives on; Bonaparte's empire is destroyed. Washington and Bonaparte emerged from the womb of democracy: both of them born to liberty, the former remained faithful to her, the latter betrayed her.

Washington acted as the representative of the needs, the ideas, the enlightened men, the opinions of his age; he supported, not thwarted, the stirrings of intellect; he desired only what he had to desire, the very thing to which he had been called: from which derives the coherence and longevity of his work. That man who struck few blows because he kept things in proportion has merged his existence with that of his country: his glory is the heritage of civilization; his fame has risen like one of those public sanctuaries where a fecund and inexhaustible spring flows.

Bonaparte might have enriched public life equally; he acted on the most intelligent, bravest, most brilliant nation on earth. What a ranking he would have today if he had joined magnanimity to whatever he possessed of the heroic, if, at once Washington and Bonaparte, he had appointed liberty as the sole legatee of his glory!

But that giant never linked his own destiny to that of his contemporaries; his genius belonged to the modern age: his ambition was that of ancient times; he could not see that the miracles of his life were worth more than a coronet, and that such Gothic ornaments suited him ill. At one moment he launched himself at the future, at another he fell back into the past; and whether he stirred or followed the current of his time, with his prodigious force he drove on or held back the waves. Men were in his eyes only a means to power; no identification was established between their happiness and his own: he promised to deliver them, and he enchained them; he isolated himself from them, they distanced themselves from him. The Egyptian Pharaohs sited their funeral pyramids not among flowering meadows, but in the midst of sterile sands; those great tombs stand like eternity in the solitude: Bonaparte built the monument to his fame in their image.

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 1

Journey from Philadelphia to New-York and Boston - Mackenzie

London, April to September 1822. (Revised December 1846)

I was impatient to continue my journey. It was not Americans I had come to see, but something totally different from the men I understood, something more in accord with the customary nature of my ideas; I longed to throw myself into an enterprise for which I was equipped with nothing but my imagination and courage.

When I framed the idea of discovering the North-West Passage, it was not known whether North America extended towards the Pole joining itself to Greenland, or whether it terminated in some sea contiguous with Hudson Bay and the Behring Straits. In 1772, Hearne had discovered the sea at the mouth of the Copper Mine River, in latitude 71 degrees 15 minutes North, and longitude 119 degrees 15 minutes West of Greenwich (Both latitude and longitude are now known to be too great by four and a quarter degrees: Note, Geneva 1832).

On the Pacific coast, the efforts of Captain Cook and other later navigators had left certain doubts. In 1787, a ship was said to have entered an inland sea of North America; according to the narrative of the captain of this vessel, what had been taken for an uninterrupted coastline to the north of California, was really just a closely-linked chain of islands. The British Admiralty sent Vancouver to verify these reports, which proved false. Vancouver had not yet made his second voyage.

In the United States, in 1791, there was growing talk of the route taken by Mackenzie: starting from Fort Chipewyan on Mountain Lake, on the 3rd June 1789, he descended the river to which he gave his name and reached the Arctic Ocean.

This discovery might have made me change direction and head due north; but I would have had scruples about altering the plan agreed between myself and Monsieur de Malesherbes. So I decided to travel west, so as to strike the north-west coast above the Gulf of California; from there, following the trend of the continent, and keeping the sea in sight, I hoped to explore the Behring Straits, double the northernmost cape of America, descend by the eastern shores of the Polar Sea, and return to the United States by way of Hudson Bay, Labrador, and Canada.

What means did I possess to execute this prodigious peregrination? None. Most French explorers have been solitary men, abandoned to their own resources; only rarely has the Government or some company employed or assisted them. Englishmen, Americans, Germans, Spaniards and Portuguese have accomplished, with the support of the national will, what in our case impoverished individuals have attempted in vain. Mackenzie, and others after him, have made conquests in the vast expanses of America, to the benefit of the United States and Great Britain, which I dreamt of making in order to extend the possessions of my native land. If I had succeeded, I would have had the honor of giving French names to unknown regions, of endowing my country with a colony on the Pacific Ocean, taking the rich fur trade from a rival power, and preventing that rival from opening up a shorter route to the Indies, by putting France herself in possession of that route. I have recorded these plans in my *Essai historique*,



published in London in 1796, the plans being taken from my manuscript account of my travels in 1791. These dates show that I was ahead of the latest explorers of the Arctic ice-fields in my intentions and my writings.

I found no encouragement in Philadelphia. I recognized then that the object of this first voyage would not be achieved, and that my journey was only the prelude to a second, longer voyage. I wrote to this effect to Monsieur de Malesherbes, and while awaiting future events, I dedicated to poetry whatever would be lost to science. Indeed, if I failed to find in America what I sought, the Polar world, I did find a new Muse there.

A stage-coach, like the one which had brought me to Baltimore, carried me from Baltimore to New-York, a lively, crowded, commercial city, which was nevertheless far from what it is today, far from what it will be in a few years' time: for the United States grows faster than this manuscript. I went on a pilgrimage to Boston to salute the first battlefield of American liberty. I saw the plains of Lexington; I sought there, as since at Sparta, the tomb of those warriors who died in obedience to the sacred laws of their country. A memorable example of the links between human affairs! A finance bill, passed in the English Parliament in 1765, engendered a new power in the world in 1782, and caused the disappearance of one of the oldest kingdoms of Europe in 1789!

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 2

The Hudson River – A passenger's recital – Mr. Swift – Departure for Niagara Falls with a Dutch guide –  
Monsieur Violet

London, April to September 1822.

At New-York I embarked on the packet sailing for Albany, on the upper reaches of the Hudson River. The company was numerous. Towards evening on the first day, we were served a collation of fruit and milk; the women sat on the benches and the men on the deck, at their feet. Conversation was not long maintained: at the sight of a beautiful natural picture one involuntarily falls silent. Suddenly someone called out: 'There is the place where Asgill was captured.' They asked a Quaker girl from Philadelphia to recite the ballad called Asgill. We were among the mountains; the passenger's voice was lost over the waters, or it swelled in volume when we sailed closer to the shore. The fate of a young soldier, a brave and poetic lover, honored by Washington's interest, and the generous intervention of an unfortunate Queen, added a romantic charm to the scene. The friend I lost, Monsieur de Fontanes, let fall courageous words in memory of Asgill, when Bonaparte was about to ascend the throne on which Marie-Antoinette had sat. The American officers seemed moved by the Pennsylvanian ballad: the memory of their country's past troubles made them more aware of the calm of the present moment. They contemplated, with emotion, those places formerly swarming with soldiers, ringing with the sound of warfare, buried now in profound peace; those places gilded by the last light of day, alive with the whistling of redbirds, the cooing of blue wood-pigeons, the song of the mocking-birds, and whose inhabitants resting their arms on the fences of their enclosures, fringed with cross-vines, watched our boat pass by.

Arriving at Albany, I went to find Mr. Swift, for whom I had a letter of introduction. This Mr. Swift traded fur with the Indian tribes in the territory ceded to the United States by England; for the civilized powers, both republican and monarchist, unceremoniously apportion land in America between themselves which does not belong to them. After listening to me, Mr. Swift raised some very reasonable objections. He told me that I could not undertake a journey of this importance on the spur of the moment, alone, without help, without support, and without letters of recommendation for the English, American, and Spanish posts through which I was forced to pass; that, if I had the good luck to cross such desolate wastes, I would reach frozen regions where I would die from cold and hunger: he advised me to begin by acclimatizing myself, urging me to learn the Sioux, Iroquois, and Eskimo languages, to live with the trappers in the woods and the agents of the Hudson Bay Company. With this preliminary experience gained, I might then, in four or five years' time, with the assistance of the French Government, proceed on my hazardous mission.

This advice, whose validity I inwardly recognized, annoyed me. If I had believed in myself, I should have left for the Pole right away, as one sets off from Paris for Pontoise. I hid my displeasure from Mr. Swift; I asked him to find me a guide and some horses to take me to Niagara and Pittsburg: from Pittsburg, I would descend the Ohio and gather useful ideas for future projects. I had my original route plan always in mind.

Mr. Swift engaged a Dutchman for me who spoke several Indian dialects. I bought a pair of horses and left Albany.

The whole stretch of country between that town and Niagara is now cleared and inhabited; the New York canal crosses it; but then a large part of the territory was wilderness.

When the Mohawk had been crossed, and I had entered woods where no trees had ever been felled, I was seized with a sort of intoxication of freedom: I went from tree to tree, left and right, saying to myself: 'Here there are no more roads, no more towns, no monarchies, no republics, no presidents, no kings, no human beings.' And, to see if I was truly re-possessioned of my original rights, I indulged in wild antics which enraged my guide, who in his heart, thought me mad.

Alas! I thought I was alone in that forest where I held my head so high! Suddenly, I almost bruised my nose on the side of a shelter. Once beneath it, I set astonished eyes on the first savages I had ever seen. There were a score of them, men and women, painted like sorcerers, bodies half-naked, ears slit, crows' feathers on their heads, and rings through their noses. A little Frenchman, hair curled and powdered, in an apple-green coat, a woolen jacket, and a muslin shirt-frill and ruffles, was scraping a pocket-fiddle, and making the Iroquois dance to Madelon Friquet. Monsieur Violet (for so he was called) was dancing-master to these savages. They paid for his lessons in beaver skins and bears' hams. He had been a scullion in the service of General Rochambeau, during the American War. Remaining in New York, after the departure of our army, he had resolved to instruct the Americans in the fine arts. His ambition had grown with his success, and the new Orpheus was carrying civilization to the savage hordes of the New World. Speaking to me of the Indians, he always said to me: 'These savage ladies and gentlemen.' He took great pride in the agility of his pupils; indeed I have never seen such capering. Monsieur Violet, holding his little violin between chest and chin, would tune the fatal instrument and call to the Iroquois: 'Take your places!' And the whole troop would leap about like a band of demons.

Was it not a devastating experience for a disciple of Rousseau, this introduction to savage life via a dancing-lesson given to the Iroquois by General Rochambeau's scullion? I was greatly tempted to laugh, though I felt cruelly humiliated.

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 3

My savage outfit— Hunting— The Carcajou or Wolverine— The Muskrat — Water dogs — Insects —  
Montcalm and Wolfe

London, April to September 1822.

I bought a complete outfit from the Indians: two bearskins, one to serve as a half-toga; the other as a bed. I added to my new apparel the red cap in ribbed cloth, the cloak, the belt, the horn for calling in the dogs, and the bandolier of a trapper. My hair hung down over my bare neck; I sported a long beard, I was savage, hunter, and missionary all in one. They invited me to a hunt taking place next day, to track down a carcajou, or wolverine. This species is almost entirely extinct in Canada, like the beaver.

We embarked before dawn, to ascend a river flowing from the woods where the wolverine had been seen. There were thirty or so of us, Indians as well as American and Canadian trappers: part of the group walked the bank beside the flotilla, with the dogs, and the women carried our provisions.

We found no trace of the carcajou; but we killed some lynxes and muskrats. The Indians would go into deep mourning, when they accidentally killed any of the latter, since the female muskrat is, as they all know, the mother of the human race. The Chinese, being even better observers, maintain with certainty that the rat can turn into a quail, the mole into an oriole.

Our table was furnished with an abundance of river-birds and fish. The dogs are trained to dive; when they are not hunting they go fishing: they throw themselves into the rivers and seize the fish from the very bottom of the water. The women cooked our meals on a large fire, round which we took our places.

We had to lay flat, faces to the earth, to protect our eyes from the smoke, clouds of which, floating above our heads, preserved us to some degree from mosquito bites.

The various carnivorous insects, seen through a microscope, are formidable creatures. They were those winged dragons perhaps whose fossils are met with: diminished in size, in the way that matter loses energy, those hydras, griffons and the rest, are found today in an insect state. The antediluvian giants are the little men of our own day.

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 4

Encampment by the Lake of the Onondagas – Arabs – The Indian and the cow

London, April to September 1822.

Monsieur Violet offered me letters of credence for the Onondagas, the remnant of one of the six Iroquois nations. I came first of all to the Lake of the Onondagas. The Dutchman chose a suitable place to pitch camp: a river flowed from the lake; our shelter was set up in the bend of this river. We drove two forked stakes into the ground, six feet apart; we suspended a long pole horizontally in the forks of these stakes. Strips of birch bark, one end resting on the ground, the other on the transverse pole, formed the sloping roof of our palace. Our saddles had to serve as pillows and our cloaks as blankets. We fastened bells to our horses' necks and turned them loose in the woods near our camp: they did not wander far.

Fifteen years later, when I bivouacked among the sands of the desert of Saba, a few steps from the Jordan, on the edge of the Dead Sea, our horses, those slight offspring of Arabia, looked as though they were listening to tales of the Sheiks, and taking part in the story of Antar or Job's steed.

It was scarcely four hours after midday when we completed our camp. I took my gun and went to explore the neighborhood. There were few birds. Only a solitary pair flew up in front of me, like the birds I hunted in my native woods; from the color of the male I recognized the white sparrow, passer nivalis of the ornithologists. I also heard the osprey, so well characterized by its call. The flight of that exclamator, led me through the woods to a valley hemmed in between bare and rocky heights; half-way up stood a wretched cabin; a lean cow was grazing in a meadow below.

I like such little shelters: '*a chico pajarillo, chico nidillo*: for a little bird a little nest.' I sat down on the slope facing the hut planted on the opposite slope.

After a few minutes, I heard a voice in the valley: three men were driving five or six fat cows along; they set them to grazing and drove the lean cow off with blows from their switches. An Indian woman came out of the hut, went towards the frightened animal, and called to it. The cow ran towards her stretching out its neck and lowing. The settlers threatened the woman from the distance, as she returned to the cabin. The cow followed her.

I rose, descended the slope on my side, crossed the valley, and climbing the opposite hill, arrived at the hut.

I pronounced the greeting I had been taught: '*Siegoh!* I am come.' The Indian woman, instead of replying to my greeting by repeating the usual phrase: 'You are come', failed to reply at all. Then I stroked the cow: the sad yellow face of the Indian woman showed signs of feeling. I was moved by those mysterious acquaintances in adversity: there is tenderness in grieving over ills which no one else has ever grieved over.

The woman gazed at me for some time with lingering doubt then she came forward and placed her own hand on the brow of her companion in misery and solitude.

Encouraged by this mark of confidence, I said in English, since I had exhausted my Indian: ‘She is very thin!’ The Indian replied in bad English: ‘She eats very little’ – ‘She was badly treated,’ I continued. And the woman replied: ‘We are both accustomed to it; Both.’ I said: ‘This field is not yours then?’ She answered: ‘The field belonged to my dead husband. I have no children, and the pale-skins drive their cattle into my field.’

I had nothing to offer God’s creature. We parted. The woman said many things to me which I could not understand; no doubt wishes for my prosperity; if they were not heard in heaven, it was not the fault of the one who offered them, but the fault of him for whom the prayers were offered. Every soul does not possess an equal capacity for happiness, just as every field does not bear the same harvest.

I returned to my *ajoupa* (shelter), where a meal of potatoes and maize awaited me. The evening was magnificent; the lake, smooth as an un-silvered mirror, showed never a wrinkle; the river, murmuring, bathed our almost-island that the spice-bushes (*calycanthus floridus*) perfumed with the scent of apples. The whippoorwill repeated its cry: we heard it, now near, now far away, as the bird altered the location of its amorous calls. It was not my name being called. Weep, poor Will!

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 5

An Iroquois – The Sachem of the Onondagas – Velly and the Franks – A ceremony of hospitality – The Ancient Greeks

London, April to September 1822.

Next day, I went to visit the sachem of the Onondagas; I reached his village at ten in the morning. Immediately, I was surrounded by young savages who spoke to me in their language, intermixed with English phrases and a few French words; they made a great noise, and seemed happy, like the first Turks I saw later at Modon, when I disembarked on the soil of Greece. These Indian tribes, restricted to clearings made by the whites, have horses and cattle of their own; their huts are full of utensils bought in Quebec, Montreal, and Detroit, on the one side, and the markets of the United States on the other.

Those who explored the North American interior found all the different forms of government known to civilized peoples, among the various savage nations. The Iroquois belonged to a race which seemed destined to conquer all of the Indian races, if strangers had not arrived to bleed his veins dry, and arrest his genius. That intrepid creature was not awed by firearms, when they were first used against him; he stood firm while bullets whistled and cannon roared, as if he had heard them all his life; he seemed to pay them no more attention than a passing storm. As soon as he could procure a musket, he employed it more effectively than a European. He did not abandon the tomahawk, scalping-knife, or bow and arrow, because of it; he added to them the carbine, pistol, dagger and hatchet: he seemed never to have enough weapons to match his valor. Doubly equipped with the murderous instruments of Europe and America, head decorated with feathers, ears slit, face daubed with diverse colors, arms tattooed and blood-smeared, this champion of the New World became as redoubtable in appearance as in battle, on the shores which he defended foot by foot against the invaders.

The sachem of the Onondagas was an old Iroquois in the full meaning of the word; in his person he guarded the ancient traditions of the wilderness.

English writers never fail to call the Indian sachem the old gentleman. Now, the old gentleman is completely naked; he sports a feather or a fishbone piercing his nostrils, and sometimes covers his head, smooth and round as a cheese, with a three-cornered hat edged with lace, as a European mark of honor. Does Velly not portray history with the same realism? The Frankish chieftain Chilpéric rubbed his hair with rancid butter, *infundens acido comam butyro*, painted his cheeks with woad, and wore a striped jacket or a tunic of animal skins; Velly represents him as a prince magnificent to the point of ostentation as to his furniture and retinue, voluptuous to the point of debauchery, scarcely believing in God, whose ministers were subjected to his mockery.

The sachem of the Onondagas received me courteously and invited me to be seated on a mat. He spoke English and understood French; my guide knew Iroquois: the conversation was relaxed. Among other things, the old man told me that though his nation had warred with mine, he had always respected it. He complained of the Americans; he found them unjust and covetous and regretted that in the partition of Indian territories his tribe had not augmented the share that went to the English.

The women served us a meal. Hospitality is the last virtue retained by the savages in the midst of the vices of European civilization; what that hospitality once was is well-known; the hearth was as sacred as the altar.

When a tribe was driven from its woods, or when a man came seeking hospitality, the stranger began what was called the dance of the suppliant; the youngest child in the hut touched the threshold and said: 'Here is the stranger!' And the chief replied: 'Child, bring him into the hut.' The stranger, entering into the child's protection, went to sit among the ashes of the hearth. The women sang a song of consolation: 'The stranger has found a wife and a mother. The sun will rise and set for him as before.'

These customs appear as if borrowed from the Greeks: Themistocles, calling on Admetus, kisses the penates and his host's young son; (At Megara I trod perhaps on the poor woman's hearthstone, under which Phocion's cinerary urn was hidden); and Ulysses, in Alcinous' palace, implores Arete: 'Noble Arete, daughter of Rhexenor, after suffering cruel misfortune, I throw myself at your feet...' Having spoken these words, the hero goes and sits among the ashes of the hearth. – I took leave of the old sachem. He had been present at the siege of Quebec. Among the shameful years of Louis XV's reign, the episode of the Canadian War consoles us, as if it were a page of our ancient history discovered in the Tower of London.

Montcalm, charged with defending Canada unaided, against forces four times his in number and continually replenished, fights successfully for two years; he defeats Lord Loudon and General Abercrombie. At last fortune deserts him; wounded beneath the walls of Quebec, he falls, and two days later breathes his last: his grenadiers bury him in a crater made by a shell, a grave worthy of the honor of our arms! His noble opponent Wolfe dies facing him. He pays with his own life for Montcalm's, and for the glory of expiring on a few French flags.



## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 6

Journey from the Lake of the Onondagas to the River Genesee – Bees – Clearings – Hospitality – A bed –  
A rattlesnake charmed by a flute

London, April to September 1822.

Now my guide and I remounted our horses. Our trail became more difficult, marked only by a line of felled trees. The trunks of these trees served as bridges over the streams, or as fascines through the quagmires. At this time Americans were settling nearer to the Genesee concessions. These concessions fetched a higher or lower price depending on the condition of the soil, the quality of the trees, and the course and force of the water.

It has been observed that settlers are often preceded in the woods by bees: the vanguard of the farmers, they are symbols of the civilization and industry they herald. Strangers to America, arriving in the wake of Columbus, these peaceful conquerors have only robbed this new world of flowers of treasures whose use was unknown to the natives: they have only employed these treasures to enrich the soil they took them from.

The clearings on both sides of the road along which I travelled, offered a curious blend of the natural and civilized state. In one corner of a wood which had only ever known the yell of the savage and the calls of wild creatures, one came across a ploughed field; from the same viewpoint one saw an Indian wigwam and a planter's cabin. Some of these cabins, already finished, recalled the neatness of Dutch farm-houses; others only half-complete, had no roof but the sky.

I was received in these dwellings, the result of a morning's work; there I often found a family surround by European elegance: mahogany furniture, a piano, carpets and mirrors, a few paces from an Iroquois hut. In the evening, when the farm-workers had returned from the woods and fields armed with axes and hoes, the windows were opened. My host's daughters, their lovely blonde hair in ringlets, accompanied at the piano would sing the duet from Paisiello's Pandolfetto, or a cantabile by Cimarosa.

In the better districts, small towns were established. The spire of a new church rose from the heart of an old forest. As the English take their customs with them wherever they go, when I had crossed a region without a trace of inhabitants, I would come across an inn-sign swinging from the branch of a tree. Trappers, planters and Indians, met together at these caravanserais: the first time I stayed at one, I swore it would be my last.

On entering one of these hostelrys, I stood amazed at the sight of an immense bed, built in a circle round a post: each traveller took his place in this bed, his feet against the post in the middle, his head at the circumference of the circle, so that the sleepers were arranged symmetrically, like the spokes of a wheel or the sticks of a fan. After some hesitation, I climbed into this contraption, since I could see no one else within. I was beginning to doze, when I felt something slide against me: it was the leg of my big Dutchman; I've never in my life experienced a greater sense of horror. I leapt from the hospitable receptacle, cordially cursing the customs of our good forefathers. I went and slept in my cloak in the moonlight: that voyager's bedfellow at least was all sweetness, freshness, and purity.

On the bank of the Genesee, we found a ferry. A troop of settlers and Indians crossed the river with us. We camped in meadows bright with butterflies and flowers. In our varied clothing, our different groups around the fire, our horses tethered or grazing, we had the look of a caravan. It was there I made the acquaintance of the rattlesnake, which allows itself to be charmed by the notes of a flute. The Greeks would have made an Orpheus of my Canadian; a lyre of the flute; Cerberus, or perhaps Eurydice of the snake.

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 7

An Indian Family – Night in the forest – The family departs – The savages of Niagara Falls – Captain Gordon – Jerusalem

London, April to September 1822.

We rode on to Niagara. We were no more than twenty miles or so distant, when we saw, in an oak-grove, the camp-fire of some savages who had halted beside a stream, where we ourselves thought of bivouacking. We profited from their prior efforts: after grooming the horses, and preparing for night, we approached the group. Legs crossed in the manner of tailors, we seated ourselves among the Indians, round the fire, to roast our maize-cakes.

The family comprised two women, two infants at the breast, and three braves. The conversation became general that is to say a great many gestures were interspersed with a few words from me; later they all fell asleep where they were sitting. The only one left awake, I went to sit by myself on a tree root which stretched alongside the stream.

The moon showed above the treetops; a balmy breeze, which that Queen of the Night brought with her from the Orient, seemed to precede her through the forest, as if it were her cool breath. The solitary light rose higher and higher in the sky: now following her course, now traversing banks of cloud that resembled the summits of some snow-crowned mountain chain. All would have been silence and peace, but for the fall of a few leaves, the passage of a sudden breeze, the hooting of a tawny owl; far off, the dull roar of Niagara Falls could be heard, echoing from wild to wild, in the still of night, before dying away among the lonely forests. It was in nights like these that a previously unknown Muse appeared to me; I gathered some of her inflections; I noted them in my book, by starlight, as a commonplace musician might transcribe the notes dictated to him by a great master of harmonies.

Next day, the Indians armed themselves, while the women collected the baggage. I distributed a little gunpowder and some vermilion amongst my hosts. We parted, touching our foreheads and chests. The braves gave out a cry as a signal to march, and set off in front; the women walked behind, carrying children, who, slung in furs from their mothers' backs, turned their heads to look at us. I followed their departure with my eyes, until the whole troupe vanished among the forest trees.

The savages of Niagara Falls in the English dependency were charged with policing that side of the frontier. This bizarre constabulary, armed with bows and arrows, prevented us from crossing. I was obliged to send the Dutchman to Fort Niagara for a permit to enter the British Government's area of control. This saddened my heart somewhat, when I remembered that France had once controlled Upper and Lower Canada. My guide returned with the permit: I still have it, signed: Captain Gordon. Is it not singular that I discovered the same British name on the door of my cell in Jerusalem? 'Thirteen pilgrims had inscribed their names on the room's door and walls: the first was Charles Lombard, and he visited Jerusalem in 1669; the last was John Gordon, and the date of his stay was 1804.'

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 8

Chapter 8: Niagara Falls – A rattlesnake – I fall over the edge of the gorge

London, April to September 1822.

I spent two days in the Indian village, from which I wrote another letter to Monsieur Malesherbes. The Indian women occupied themselves in various tasks; their babies were slung in nets from the branches of a large copper beech. The grass was covered with dew, the breeze emerged from the forest all scented, and the cotton plants, their bolls inverted, resembled white rose-bushes. The breeze rocked the aerial cradles with an almost imperceptible motion; the mothers rose from time to time to see that their children were asleep, and had not been woken by the birds. It was ten miles or so from the Indian village to the falls: it took me and my guide half as many hours to reach them. Already, six miles away, a column of mist indicated the position of the waterfall. My heart beat with joy mingled with terror on entering the wood which hid from view one of the greatest spectacles that Nature has offered mankind.

We dismounted. Leading our horses by the bridle, we made our way through heaths and copses, to the bank of the Niagara River, seven or eight hundred paces above the falls. As I was still going forward, the guide seized my arm; he arrested my course at the very edge of the water, which swept by with the speed of an arrow. It did not foam, it glided in a solid mass over the rocky slope; its silence prior to falling contrasted with the fall itself. Scripture often compares a nation to mighty waters; this was a dying nation, which robbed by agony of its voice, was hurling itself into the abyss of eternity.

The guide held me fast, for I felt drawn, so to speak, towards the flood, and had an involuntary desire to hurl myself into it. Now I gazed at the river banks upstream, now downstream at an island that separated the waters, and the point where those waters suddenly ceased, as if they had been cut off in mid-air.

After a quarter of an hour of perplexity, and an indefinable admiration, I went on to the falls. You can find the two descriptions of them I have given, in the *Essai sur les Révolutions*, and in *Atala*. Today, wide highways lead to the cataract; there are inns on the American side, and the British, and mills and factories below the chasm.

I cannot convey the thoughts that stirred in me at the sight of such sublime disorder. In the wildernesses of my early existence, I was forced to invent people to adorn them; I drew from my own substance beings I found nowhere else, that I carried within me. So I placed the remembrances of *Atala* and *René* beside Niagara Falls, as if they were an expression of its sadness. What is a cataract, falling eternally beneath the senseless gaze of earth and sky, if human nature is not there with its misfortunes and destiny? To sink into that solitude of water and mountains, and know not whom to tell of that great spectacle! The waves, rocks, woods, torrents there for itself alone! Give the soul a companion, and the smiling finery of the hills, the breath of fresh air from the flood, becomes wholly delightful: the day's travels, the sweetest of rests at the end of the journey, the passage of the waves, sleep on a bed of moss, elicit the deepest tenderness from the heart. I seated Velléda on Armorica's shores; Cymodocée under Athenian porticos; Blanca in the Alhambra's halls. Alexander created cities everywhere he passed: I have left dreams everywhere I have trailed my life.

I have seen the cascades of the Alps with their chamois, and those of the Pyrenees with their lizards; I have not ascended high enough up the Nile to view its cataracts, which are merely rapids; and I say naught of the azure zones of Terni and Tivoli, elegant settings for ruins, or subjects for the poet's song:

*Et praeceps Anio ac Tiburni lucus:* 'And swift Anio and the sacred groves of Tibur'

Niagara eclipses them all. I considered this cataract which was revealed to the old world, not by feeble travelers of my sort, but by missionaries, who, searching the solitude for God, threw themselves on their knees at the sight of some wonder of nature, and accepted martyrdom as they ended their hymn of praise. Our priests saluted the beautiful landscapes of America, and consecrated them with their blood; our soldiers clapped their hands at the ruins of Thebes and presented arms to Andalusia: all the genius of France is in its twin militia of camp and altar.

I was holding my horse's bridle twisted round my arm; a rattlesnake started rustling among the bushes. The frightened horse reared and backed towards the falls. I could not free my arm from the reins; the horse ever more terrified, dragged me with him. His forefeet already off the ground, on his haunches at the edge of the abyss, he held position only by the strength of his loins. It was all over with me, when the animal himself astonished by his new peril, pirouetted backwards to safety. Dying in the Canadian woods, would my soul have borne, to the supreme tribunal, sacrifices, good works, virtues like those of Père Jogues and Père Lallemand, or wasted days and wretched fantasies?

This was not the only danger I ran at Niagara: a ladder of creepers allowed the savages to climb down to the lower basin; it was broken. Wishing to view the falls from below, I ventured, despite my guide's protests, onto the flank of an almost perpendicular rock. In spite of the roar of the water foaming below me, I kept my head and got to within forty feet of the bottom. At that point, the stone being bare and vertical, offered me no foothold; I remained clutching a last root with one hand, feeling my fingers opening under the weight of my body: few men have spent two minutes such as I counted then. My weary hand let go: I fell. By extraordinary good luck, I found myself on the edge of a rock, on which I should have been smashed to a thousand pieces, without feeling myself greatly injured; I was a few inches from the abyss, and had not rolled into it; but when the cold and damp began to penetrate I saw that I had not escaped so lightly: I had broken my left arm above the elbow. The guide, who could see me from above and to whom I made signs of distress, ran to find the savages. They hoisted me up with ropes by an otters' path, and carried me to their village. I had only a simple fracture: a pair of splints, a bandage, and a sling, was sufficient for my cure.

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 9

Twelve days in a cabin – Changing customs among the savages – Birth and death – Montaigne – Song of the adder –The little Indian girl, the original of Mila

London, April to September 1822.

I stayed for twelve days with my doctors, the Indians of Niagara. I saw tribes there who had come from Detroit or from the country to the center and east of Lake Erie. I enquired about their customs; for a few small gifts I obtained re-enactments of their ancient rites, since the rites themselves scarcely exist now. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the American War of Independence, the savages still ate their prisoners, or rather the dead ones: an English captain, ladling some soup from an Indian woman's cooking pot with a ladle, retrieved a hand.

The Indian customs associated with birth, and death, are the least eroded, since they have not been thoughtlessly lost, like those of the segments of life which separate them; they are not things of passing fashion. In order to honor him, the new-born child still has the most ancient name of his family bestowed upon him; that of his grandmother for instance: since names are always taken from the maternal line. From that moment, the child occupies the place of the woman whose name he has received; in speaking to him, one grants him the status of the relative brought to life again by the name; so an uncle may address his nephew by the title of grand-mother. This custom, laughable thought it may seem, is nevertheless touching. It resurrects the ancient dead; it recreates in the feebleness of the first years of life, the feebleness of the last; it brings together the extremities of life, the beginning and end of a family; it confers a species of immortality on their ancestors and imagines them present in the midst of their descendants.

In what concerns the dead, it is easy to find signs of the savage's attachment to sacred relics. Civilized nations, in order to preserve their country's memories, have the mnemonics of writing and the arts; they have cities, palaces, spires, columns, obelisks; they have the marks of the plough on once-cultivated fields; their names are cut in bronze and marble, their actions recorded in their histories.

Nothing of that appertains to the peoples of the wilderness: their names are not written on the trees; their huts, built in a few hours, vanish in a moment; the sticks with which they labor barely scratch the earth, and cannot even raise a furrow. Their traditional songs die with the last memory that retains them, vanishing with the last voice that repeats them. The tribes of the New World have only one monument: their graves. Take the bones of their fathers from these savages, and you take from them their history, their laws and even their gods; you remove from those men, for future generations, the proof of their existence as that of their extinction.

I wished to hear the songs of my hosts. A little fourteen-year old Indian girl, called Mila, a very pretty girl (Indian women are only pretty at that age) sang something quite delightful. Was this not the very couplet cited by Montaigne? 'Adder stay now! Stay now, Adder, so my sister may take from the pattern of your markings, the embroidery and style of a fine belt I may give my beloved: so shall your beauty and decoration be preferred forever above all other snakes.'

The author of the *Essais* met with Iroquois at Rouen who, according to him, were very reasonable people: 'But, still,' he adds, 'they do not wear breeches!'

If I ever publish the *Stromateis* or follies of my youth, as Saint Clement of Alexandria did, Mila will appear there.

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 10

DIGRESSIONS - Ancient Canada – The Indian population – The decline of customs – The true civilization spread by religion; the false civilization spread by trade – The Métis or Burntwoods – The Wars between the Companies – The death of the Indian languages

London, April to September 1822.

The Canadians are no longer such as were described by Cartier, Champlain, La Hontan, Lescarbot, Lafitau, Charlevoix and the *Lettres édifiantes*: the sixteenth century and the start of the seventeenth century were still an era of powerful imagination and simple customs; the wonder of the former reflected virgin nature, and the candor of the latter recreated the simplicity of the savage. Champlain, at the finish of his first voyage to Canada, in 1603, recounts that close *'to the Baye des Chaleurs, to the south, is an island, where a dreadful monster lives, that the savages call Gougou.'* Canada had its giant just as the Cape of Good Hope did. Homer is the true father of all these inventions; There are always the Cyclopes, Charybdis and Scylla, ogres and *gougous*.

The savage population of North America, not including the Mexicans or Eskimos, comprises today no more than four hundred thousand souls, on both sides of the Rocky Mountains; travellers even put it as low as a hundred and fifty thousand. The decline of Indian customs has gone hand in hand with the depopulation of the tribes. Their religious traditions have become confused; the instruction spread by Canadian Jesuits has mingled foreign ideas with the native ideas of the indigenous peoples: one finds, in their crude fables, Christian beliefs disfigured; most of the savages wear a cross as an ornament, and the protestant traders sell them what the Catholic missionaries give them. Let me say, to the honor of our country and the glory of our religion, that the Indians are strongly attached to us; that they never cease to mourn our absence, and that a robe noire (a black robe, a missionary) is still the subject of veneration in the American forests. The savage continues to love us beneath the trees where we were his first guests, on the soil we have trodden, and where we have consigned to him our graves.

When the Indian was naked, or dressed in skins, he had something great and noble about him; in our time, European rags, without covering his nakedness, are a witness to his wretchedness: he is a beggar at the inn-door, no longer a savage in the forest.

In the end, an intermediate race, the Métis, formed, born of colonists and Indian women. These men, nicknamed Bois-Brûlés (Burntwoods), because of the color of their skin, are the exchange-brokers between the creators of their twin origin. Speaking the languages of both their fathers and their mothers, they possess the vices of both races. These bastards of a civilized and a savage nature, sell themselves now to the Americans, now to the English, so that they might grant them the fur monopoly; they fuel the rivalry between the English Hudson's Bay and North West companies, and the American companies, Columbian-American Fur, Missouri Fur and the rest: they hunt themselves, as paid specialists, and with the hunters paid by the companies.

Only the great war of American Independence is famous. We forget that blood also flowed on account of the minor interests of a handful of merchants. The Hudson's Bay Company sold, in 1811, to Lord Selkirk, land along the Red River; it was settled in 1812. The North-West or Canada Company took umbrage at



this. The two companies, allied to different Indian tribes and supported by the Bois-Brûlés, came to blows. This domestic conflict, horrid in its details, took place amongst the frozen wildernesses of Hudson Bay. Lord Selkirk's colony was destroyed in June 1815, exactly at the time of the Battle of Waterloo. In these two theatres of warfare, so different in their brilliance and obscurity, the woes of the human species were the same.

Search no longer, in America, for those artistically constructed political constitutions of which Charlevoix has recounted the history: the Huron monarchy, or the Iroquois Republic. Something of that destruction has been accomplished and is still being accomplished in Europe, under our very eyes; a Prussian poet, at a banquet given by the Teutonic Order, recited, in old Prussian of about 1400, the heroic deeds of his country's ancient warriors: no one understood him, and they gave him, in recompense, a hundred empty walnut shells. Today, Breton, Basque, Gaelic die out from cottage to cottage, with the vanishing goat-herds and ploughmen.

In the English county of Cornwall, the native language was extinct by about 1676. A fisherman said to some travellers: 'I scarcely know four or five people who speak Breton, and they are old timers like me, sixty to eighty years old; all the youngsters no longer understand a word.'

The small tribes of the Orinoco no longer exist; of their dialect there only remain a dozen or so words uttered in the tree-tops by parakeets that have been freed, like Agrippina's thrush that chirped Greek words from the balustrades of the Roman palaces. Such will be, sooner or later, the fate of our modern tongues, the ruins of Greek and Latin. What raven, freed from a cage, belonging to the last Franco-Gallic priest, will croak, to a foreign people, our successors, from the heights of some ruined bell-tower: 'Hear the accents of a voice once known to you: you will bring an end to all such speech.'

Live on so, Bossuet, that in the end your masterpiece may outlast, in a bird's memory, your language and your remembrance among men!

## BOOK VII

### CHAPTER 11

The former French possessions in America – Regrets – Obsession with the past –  
A note from Francis Conyngham

London, April to September 1822.

Speaking of Canada and Louisiana, or looking, on the old maps, at the extent of the former French colonies in America, I have asked myself how the government of my country could have allowed those colonies to perish, that today would have been an inexhaustible source of prosperity for us.

From Acadia and Canada to Louisiana, from the mouth of the St Lawrence to that of the Mississippi, the territory of New France surrounded that which formed the confederation of the first thirteen united States: eleven others, with the District of Columbia, the territory of Michigan, the North-West, Missouri, Oregon and Arkansas, belonged to us, or would have belonged to us, as they do belong to the United States after their transfer by the English and Spanish, our successors in Canada and Louisiana. The region between the Atlantic to the north-east, the Arctic Sea to the north, the Pacific Ocean and the Russian possessions to the north-west, and the Gulf of Mexico to the south, that is to say more than two thirds of North America, acknowledged French law.

I fear that the Restoration has simply lost its way among ideas contrary to those which I express here: its obsession with holding onto the past, an obsession which I never ceased to oppose, would not have been a disaster if it had merely overthrown me by removing a prince's favor from me; but it might in fact overthrow the throne. Stasis is impossible in politics; power must advance with human intelligence. Let us respect the greatness of time; let us contemplate with veneration the flow of the centuries, made sacred by the memory and footsteps of our forefathers; however let us not try to progress backwards towards them, because they no longer possess anything of our real being, and if we attempt to seize them, they vanish. The Chapter of Notre Dame d'Aix-la-Chapelle opened Charlemagne's tomb, they say, around 1450. They found the emperor seated on a golden chair, holding in his skeletal hands the Book of the Gospels written in letters of gold: before him were set his scepter and his shield of gold; at his side was his sword Joyeuse, sheathed in a golden scabbard. He was dressed in Imperial robes. On his head, which a gold chain held upright, was a veil that covered what had been his face, surmounted by a crown. They touched the phantom; it fell to dust. We owned vast countries overseas: they offered a refuge for our excess population, a market for our trade, a source of supply for our navy. We are excluded from a new universe, where the human race is starting again: the English, Portuguese, and Spanish languages serve, in Africa, Asia, Oceania, the South Sea Islands, and on the continent of the two Americas, to convey the thoughts of many millions of men; while we, disinherited of the conquests achieved by our courage and our genius, are at pains to hear the language of Colbert and Louis XIV spoken in some little town of Louisiana and Canada, under foreign domination: it remains only as a witness to our reverses of fortune, and our political mistakes.

And who is the king whose power now replaces that of the King of France in the Canadian forests? He who long ago had this note penned to me:

*Royal Lodge, Windsor, 4th June 1822*

*Monsieur Le Vicomte,*

*I am commanded by the King to invite Your Excellency to dine and stay overnight here on this Tuesday 6th.*

*Your very humble and very obedient servant,*

*Francis Conyngham*

It was my destiny to be tormented by princes. I broke off; I re-crossed the Atlantic once more; I restored the arm broken at Niagara; I stripped myself of my bearskin; I put on my gilded vestments again; I returned from an Iroquois wigwam to the Royal Lodge of his Britannic Majesty, monarch of three united kingdoms, and Emperor of India; I left behind my hosts with pierced ears and the little beaded native girl; wishing Lady Conyngham the sweetness of Mila, and her years which still belong only to the earliest moment of spring, to those days which precede the May month, and which our Gallic poets call l'Avrillée.

## BOOK VIII

### CHAPTER 1

The Lakes of Canada – A fleet of Indian canoes – The history of the rivers

London, April to September 1822. (Revised December 1846)

The little beaded girl's tribe departed; my guide, the Dutchman, refused to accompany me beyond the cataract; I paid him off, and joined some traders who were leaving to travel down the Ohio; before leaving I took a look at the Canadian lakes. Nothing is as sad as the aspect of those lakes. The expanses of the Ocean and the Mediterranean open up a path for nations, and their shores are or were inhabited by civilized peoples, numerous and powerful; the Canadian lakes reveal only the nakedness of their waters, which meet an unclothed land once more: solitudes which separate further solitudes. Uninhabited coastlines gaze at seas without vessels; you land on deserted shores from empty waves.

Lake Erie is more than thirty miles long. The nations of the lakeshore were exterminated by the Iroquois, two centuries ago. It is a terrifying thing to see the Indians venture out in bark canoes onto the lake, renowned for its storms, where myriads of serpents once swarmed. These Indians hang their manitous (objects possessing supernatural powers) from the stern of their canoes, and dash into the midst of the whirlpools among the towering waves. The water, level with the sides of the canoes, seems ready to swallow them. The hunting dogs bay, their paws resting on the gunnels, while their masters, keeping a profound silence, strike the waves in unison with their paddles. The canoes advance in line: at the lead prow stands a chief who repeats the diphthong *oah-* *o* on a long soft note, *a* in a short shrill tone. In the last canoe is another chief, who is also standing and handling an oar, shaped like a tiller. The other braves are crouched on their heels inside the boats. Through the breeze and mist, one can see only the feathers with which the Indians heads are adorned, the outstretched necks of the howling mastiffs, and the shoulders of the two sachems, the pilot and augur: they look like the gods of these lakes.

The Canadian rivers lack the history of the old world; the fate of the Ganges, Euphrates, Nile, Danube and Rhine is otherwise. What changes have they not seen on their banks! What blood and sweat have conquerors not shed, on their journeys to traverse those waves that a goatherd at the source can step across!

## BOOK VIII

### CHAPTER 2

#### The Course of the Ohio

London, April to September 1822.

Leaving the Canadian lakes, we came via Pittsburgh to the confluence of the Kentucky and the Ohio; there, the landscape displays an extraordinary grandeur. This country of such magnificence is nevertheless called *Kentucky* from the name of its river which signifies river of blood. It owes its name to its beauty: for more than two centuries, the *Nations* siding with the Cherokees and those siding with the Iroquois nations have been in dispute over the hunting grounds.

Will European generations be more virtuous and free on those shores than the lost generations of Americans? Will slaves not plough the earth beneath their masters' whips, in those wildernesses of man's primitive independence? Will prisons and gibbets not replace the open hut and the tall tulip tree where the bird makes its nest? Will the rich soil not give rise to new wars? Will Kentucky cease to be the field of blood, and works of art more beautiful than the works of nature adorn the banks of the Ohio?

Having passed the Wabash, the Great Cypress grove, the Winged or Cumberland River, the Cherokee or Tennessee River, and the Yellow Banks, one reaches a tongue of land often drowned by the vast waters; there the Ohio merges with the Mississippi at 36 degrees 51 minutes latitude. The two rivers meet, while an equal resistance slows their course; they slumber against each other in the same channel, without merging, for a few miles, like two great nations separated at their source, then joined to create a single race; like two illustrious rivals sharing the same resting place after a battle; like a married couple, of opposing blood, who at first had little inclination to unite their destinies in the nuptial bed.

And I too, like the powerful flow of the rivers, have extended the little course of my life, now on one side of the mountain, now on the other; capricious in my mistakes, never wicked; preferring the bare valleys to the rich plains, halting by flowers rather than palaces. Moreover, I was so delighted by my travels, that I scarcely thought any more of the Pole. A company of traders off to visit the Creek Indians, in the Floridas, allowed me to travel with them.

We were headed for the region known at that time under the general name of the Floridas, now occupied by the states of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee. There, we would more or less follow the trails that now link the grand route from Natchez to Nashville, through Jackson and Florence, with that which in Virginia, runs through Knoxville and Salem: a region little frequented at this time, but whose lakes and sites of interest Bartram had explored. The planters of Georgia and the maritime Floridas came to the various tribes of Creeks to buy horses and half-savage cattle that bred extensively in the savannahs (treeless plains) which are pierced by those well-springs on whose banks I placed Atala and Chactas. They extend even as far as the Ohio.

We were urged on now by a fresh breeze. The Ohio, swollen by a hundred rivers, now lost itself in lakes that opened before us, now in forest. Islands rose from the midst of the lakes. We sailed towards one of the largest: we landed there at eight in the morning.

I crossed a meadow dense with yellow-flowering ragwort, pink-headed hollyhocks, and abelias with purplish blooms.

An Indian ruin caught my attention. The contrast between this ruin and virgin nature, this human monument in a wilderness, caused me great emotion. What people had lived on this island? What had been their name, and race, the length of their stay? Did they still exist, as the world in whose breast they were hidden existed unknown to three quarters of the earth? The silence of that people is contemporary perhaps with the noise of great nations fallen to silence in their turn. (The ruins of Mitla and Palenque in Mexico, show today that the New World can dispute its antiquity with the Old: Note, Paris 1834)

The sandy crevices, of their ruins or tumuli, sported poppies, with red petals hanging from the tip of a peduncle tending to pale green. The stem and the flower had a scent which stayed on the fingers when one had touched the plant. The perfume of this flower remains, as a symbol of the memory of a life passed in solitude.

I observed a water-lily: it was preparing to hide its white bud in the water, at the day's end; the weeping shrub (nyctanthe: gardenia or Malabar jasmine) waits for night to reveal itself: the wife goes to her rest at the hour when the courtesan rises.

The pyramidal oenothera (evening primrose), seven or eight feet high, with oblong greenish-black jagged leaves has another manner of behaving and another fate: its yellow flowers begin to half-open in the evening, in the space of time it takes Venus to descend below the horizon; it continues to open in starlight; dawn finds it in all its splendor; half-way through the morning it fades; it dies at midday. It only lives a few hours; but it passes those hours under a serene sky, between the sighs of Venus and dawn; what matter then the brevity of that life?

A stream is embowered with Venus fly-traps; a multitude of dragonflies buzz around. There are also hummingbirds and butterflies which, in their most glittering jewelry, joust brilliantly with iridescent flowers. In the midst of my wandering and my studies, I was often struck by their futility. What! Could the Revolution, which always weighed on me and which had driven me into the woods, inspire me with nothing more serious? What! During those days of upheaval in my native country, could I occupy myself with nothing more than descriptions of plants, butterflies and flowers? Human individuality serves to measure the littleness of the greatest events. How many men are indifferent to those same events? How many other men are ignorant of them? The total population of the globe is estimated to be eleven or twelve hundred million; a human being dies every second: so in every minute of our existence, of our smiles, our joys, sixty expire, sixty families mourn and weep. Life is a continual plague. This chain of bereavement and funerals that winds us about, never breaks, it lengthens; we ourselves form a link. And then we magnify the importance of those catastrophes of which seven-eighths of the world heard not a word! Let us hanker after a fame that will not vanish a few miles from our grave! Let us plunge into an ocean of bliss where each minute flows among sixty coffins continually re-filled!

*'Nam nox nulla diem, neque noctem aurora secuta est,  
Quae non audierit mixtos vagitibus aegris  
Ploratus, mortis comites et funeris atri.'*

‘No night has followed day, no dawn has followed night, in which tears and mournful sounds of grief have not been heard, the companions of death and dark funerals.’

## BOOK VIII

### CHAPTER 3

#### The Course of the Ohio

London, April to September 1822.

The savages of Florida say that in the midst of a lake there is an island where the loveliest women in the world live. The Muskogeese have tried to conquer it on many occasions; but this Eden flees before their canoes, a natural symbol of those dreams which retreat before our desires.

That land also boasted a *Fountain of Youth*: but who would wish to live again?

These fables almost took on a kind of reality to my eyes. At the moment when we least expected it, we saw a fleet of canoes emerge from a bay, some with oars others with sails. They carried two families of Creeks, one of Seminoles, the other of Muskogeese, among which were Cherokees and Burnt-woods. I was struck by the grace of these savages who in no way resembled those of Canada.

The Seminoles and Muskogeese are quite tall, and yet, in amazing contrast, their mothers, wives and daughters are, in America, the smallest women known.

The Indian women who landed near us, of mixed Cherokee and Castilian stock, were tall in stature. Two of them looked like the Creoles of San Domingo and Mauritius, but yellow-skinned and delicate like women of the Ganges. These two Floridian women, cousins on the father's side, served me as models, one for Atala, the other for Céluta: they surpassed the portraits I painted of them only by that variable and fugitive truth of nature, that physiognomy of race and climate, which I could not render. There was something indefinable in the oval face, the dusky complexion that one seemed to see through light, orange colored smoke, the hair so black and soft, the lengthened eyes, half-hidden beneath the veil of two satiny eyelids which half-opened lazily; in short in the dual attraction of the Indian and the Spanish woman.

The meeting with our hosts somewhat altered our movements; our trading agents started to enquire about horses: it was decided that we should go and install ourselves near the studs.

The plain where we camped was full of bulls, cows, horses, bison, buffalo, cranes, turkeys and pelicans: the birds mottled the green backcloth of the savannah with white, black and pink.

Our traders and trappers were agitated by many passions: not passions of race, education or prejudice, but natural passions, direct and full-blooded, and they made straight for their goal, their course witnessed only by a tree falling in the depths of an unknown forest; an uncharted valley, a nameless river. The relations between the Spaniards and the Creek women formed the basis of their adventures: The Burnt-woods played the principal part in these romances. One story was celebrated, that of a dealer in brandy, seduced and ruined by a painted woman (a courtesan). This story put into Seminole verse under the title of *Tabamica*, was sung on the trail through the woods. Carried off in turn by the settlers, the Indian women soon died of neglect at Pensacola: their misfortunes went to enhance the Romanceros and be classed with Ximena's laments.



## BOOK VIII

### CHAPTER 4

#### Two Floridian Women

London, April to September 1822.

What a delightful mother Earth is; we issue from her womb: in childhood, she holds us to her breasts swollen with milk and honey; in youth and maturity, she lavishes on us her cool waters, harvests and fruits; she offers us everywhere shade, a bath, a table, a bed; at our death, she opens her womb to us again, throwing a covering of grass and flowers over our remains, while she secretly transmutes us into her own substance, to recreate us in some graceful form. That is what I said to myself on waking, as my first glance met the sky, the canopy above my resting place.

The hunters had left for their day's work, and I was left behind with the women and children. I never strayed far from my two wood-nymphs: the one was proud, the other sad. I understood not a word of what they said to me, nor did they understand me; but I went to fetch water for them to drink, twigs for their fire, and moss for their bed. They wore the short skirts and wide slashed sleeves of Spanish women, with Indian bodices and cloaks. Their bare legs were crisscrossed in lozenge shapes with strips of birch. They plaited their hair with garlands of flowers or threaded rushes; they strung themselves with chain and glass necklaces. In their ears hung crimson berries; they had a pretty talking parrot: the bird of Armida; they fastened it on their shoulder like an emerald, or carried it hooded at their wrist as the great ladies of the tenth century carried their hawks. To firm up their breasts and arms, they rubbed themselves with apoya or American sedge. The dancing-girls of Bengal, the bayadères, chew betel-nut, while those of the Levant, the Egyptian almes, suck the gum mastic of Chios; the Floridian women crushed, between their bluish-white teeth, tears of liquidambar and roots of libanis (alkanet), which combined the fragrances of angelica, citron, and vanilla. They lived in a perfumed atmosphere that originated from them, as orange trees and flowers do in the pure emanations of their leaves and buds. I amused myself by placing little adornments in their hair: they submitted, though slightly alarmed; sorceresses themselves, they thought I was casting a spell on them. One of them, the proud one, prayed frequently; she seemed half-Christianized to me. The other sang in a velvet voice, ending each musical phrase with a moving cry. Sometimes, they spoke sharply to each other: I thought I detected the accents of jealousy, but the sad one wept, and silence was restored.

Affected, as I was, I sought examples of affection to cheer myself. Had not Camoëns, in the Indies, loved a black slave of Barbary, and could not I in America offer homage to two young yellow-skinned Sultanas? Had not Camoëns addressed his *Endechas*, or lyric songs, to Barbara esclava (a barbarian slave-girl)? Did he not write?

*'A quella captiva,  
Que me tem captivo,  
Porque nella vivo,  
Já não quer que viva.*

*Eu nunca vi rosa  
Em soaves mōlhos,*

*Que para meus olhos  
Fosse mais formosa.*

*Pretidão de amor,  
Taõ doce a figura,  
Que a neve lhe jura  
Que trocará a cõr.*

*Léda mansidão,  
Que o siso acompanha:  
Bem parece estranha,  
Mas Barbara não.*

*‘This slave, who enslaves me, since I live for her, spares not my life. Never a rose in the sweetest bouquet, struck my eyes as more charming. Her dark hair inspires love; her face is so lovely the snow desires to exchange its color with her; her gaiety is accompanied by restraint: she is a foreigner: but a barbarian, no.’*

A fishing party was organized. The sun had almost set. In the foreground were sassafras, tulip-trees, catalpas, and oaks from whose boughs hung skeins of white moss. In the near background rose the most delightful of trees, the papaw, that might have been taken for a stylus of chased silver, topped by a Corinthian urn. In the far background balsam-trees, magnolias and liquidambars proliferated.

The sun sank behind this scene: a ray fell across the domed crown of a group of tall trees, shedding its glow like a mounted ruby through the sombre foliage; the light spread among the trees and branches, throwing divergent columns and mobile arabesques on the grass. Below, were lilacs, azaleas, annulated creepers, in gigantic sprays; above, clouds, some stationary promontories or ancient turrets, others floating by, as pink smoke or silken flakes. In successive transformations, one saw furnaces gape open in these clouds, heaped piles of embers, flowing rivers of lava: all was brilliant, radiant, gilded, opulent, and saturated with light.

After the insurrection in the Morea in 1770, families of Greeks fled to Florida: they might have believed themselves still in that Ionian climate, which seems to be softened by human passions: at Smyrna, in the evening, nature sleeps like a courtesan wearied by love.

To our right were ruins belonging to the great fortified mounds found on the Ohio, to our left an ancient camp of savages; the island on which we stood, fixed in the water, and reproduced by a mirage, hovered before us in double perspective. In the east, the moon rested on distant hills; in the west the sky’s vault had melted into a sea of diamonds and sapphires, in which the sun half-buried, seemed to dissolve. The creatures of creation kept watch; the earth in adoration seemed to scatter incense over the sky, and the perfume of ambergris she exhaled from her breast fell back towards her as dew, as prayers descend again over those who pray.

Abandoned by my companions, I rested beside a mass of trees: its shadows, glazed with light, formed a penumbra in which I sat. Fireflies shone among the dark shrubs, and were eclipsed when they passed

through the moonbeams. The sound of the lake ebbing and flowing could be heard, the golden fish leaping, and the occasional cry of a diving-bird. My gaze was fixed on the water; I gradually slid into that drowsiness familiar to those who travel the world's highways: I lost all clarity of recollection; I felt myself to be living and vegetating with nature in a kind of pantheism. I leant against the trunk of a magnolia tree and fell asleep; my repose floated on some vague depth of hope.

When I emerged from this Lethe, I found myself between two women; the odalisques had returned; they had not wished to wake me, and had seated themselves silently by my side; then either feigning sleep, or really falling into a doze, their heads had drooped onto my shoulders.

A breeze blew through the grove and deluged us with a shower of magnolia petals. Then the younger of the Seminoles began to sing: if a man is unsure of himself he should never allow himself to be exposed to such temptation! One cannot say what passion may penetrate his heart with the melody. A harsh jealous voice responded to this voice: a Burnt-wood called to the two cousins; they started, and rose: dawn was beginning to break.

Though lacking Aspasia, I have often repeated this scene on the shores of Greece: climbing at dawn to the colonnade of the Parthenon, I have seen Mount Cithaeron, Mount Hymettus, the Acropolis of Corinth, the tombs and ruins bathed in a golden dewy light, transparent and shimmering, reflected by the waters, and wafted on the breezes from Salamis and Delos like perfume.

We finished our wordless voyage on the bank. At noon, we struck camp to visit and examine the horses that the Creeks wished to sell and the traders to buy. Women and children, all were summoned as witnesses, according to the custom of these solemn transactions. Stallions of every age and color, foals and mares, and also bulls, cows and heifers, began racing and galloping around us. In the confusion, I was separated from the Creeks. A dense crowd of men and horses collected at the edge of a wood. Suddenly, I recognized my two Floridians amongst them; vigorous arms were seating them on the cruppers of two Barbary horses ridden bareback by a Burnt-Wood and a Seminole. O Cid! If only I had possessed your swift Babieca to rejoin them! The mares took flight, and the vast squadron followed suit. The horses galloped, reared and bounded, neighing among the horns of bulls and buffalos, their hoofs clashing in mid-air, bloodstained manes and tails flying. A whirlwind of ravenous insects enveloped this wild cavalry circle. My Floridians disappeared from view, as Ceres' daughter vanished, snatched away by the god of the underworld.

That is how everything in my life proves abortive, and why nothing is left to me but images of what has flashed by: I will descend to the Elysian Fields with more shades than any man has ever taken with him. The fault lies in my character: I do not know how to profit from good fortune; I am not interested in anything which interests others. Except in religion, I have no beliefs. Shepherd or king, what would I have done with a scepter or a crook? I would have grown equally tired of glory or genius, work or leisure, prosperity or misfortune. Everything wearies me: I can scarcely drag my *ennui* through the days, and everywhere I go I yawn away my life.

## BOOK VIII

### CHAPTER 5

The nature of the young Muskogee ladies – The King's arrest at Vincennes – I interrupt my travels to return to Europe

London, April to September 1822.

Ronsard pictured Mary Stuart for us, ready to depart for Scotland after the death of François II:

*'You were dressed in such finery  
Leaving, alas, that sweet country  
(Whose scepter you had held so fast)  
Thoughtful now, bathing your breast,*

*In your fine crystal flow of tears,  
Sad, as you walked the alleys there  
Of the great garden of that royal chateau,  
Whose name derives from a fountain's flow.'*

Did I resemble Mary Stuart wandering the paths of Fontainebleau, as I wandered in the savannah after this separation? What is certain is that my spirit, if not my body, was enveloped by 'a veil, long, subtle and fine' as Ronsard said, that old poet adopted by the new school.

The devil having carried off the two young Muskogee ladies, I learnt from the guide that a Burnt-Wood, in love with one of the two girls, had proved jealous of me, and had decided, with the help of a Seminole, the brother of the other cousin, to snatch Atala and Céluta from me. The guides, quite bluntly, called them painted women, which shook my pride. I felt myself to be all the more humiliated in that the Burnt-Wood, my favored rival, was a mosquito, lean, dark and ugly, having all the characteristics of those insects which, according to the definition of the Grand Lama's entomologists, are creatures whose flesh is internal, and bones external. The wilderness seemed empty after my misadventure. I gave a sour welcome to my sylph, nobly rushing to console a faithless lover, as Julie forgave Saint-Preux his Parisian Floridians. I hastened to leave the wilds, where I have since recreated my drowsy companions of that night. I do not know if I have repaid them for the moments of life they granted me; at least, I made a virgin of one, and a chaste wife of the other, in expiation.

We re-crossed the Blue Mountains, and approached the European clearings near Chillicothe. I had not shed any light on the principal object of my travels; but I was accompanied by a world of poetry:

*'From the roses' depths, like a new-hatched bee,  
My Muse returned, with new spoils, to me.'*

On the banks of a stream I noticed an American house, a farm at one end, a water-mill at the other. I entered, asked for food and shelter, and was well-received.

My hostess led me up a ladder to a room above the shaft of the mill's hydraulic mechanism. My little window, festooned with ivy and cobaea (a Mexican climbing vine) with purple bell-flowers, overlooked the stream which flowed narrow and solitary, between two thick borders of willows, elms, sassafras, tamarinds and Carolina poplars.

The mossy wheel turned beneath their shade, letting fall long ribbons of water. Perch and trout leaped in the swirling foam; wagtails flew from bank to bank, and a species of kingfisher flickered on blue wings above the flow.

How happy I might have been there with the sad girl, supposing she were faithful, sitting dreaming at her feet, my head resting against her knees, listening to the noise of the weir, the revolutions of the wheel, the rolling of the millstone, the sifting of the bolter, the even beat of the clack, breathing the water's freshness and the fragrance from the husks of pearl-barley?

Night fell. I went down to the farm parlor. It was only lit by a blaze of maize straw and bean husks in the hearth. The miller's firearms, resting horizontally in the gun-rack, shone in the fire-light. I sat down on a stool in the chimney-corner, near a squirrel which kept leaping between the back of a large dog and the shelf of a spinning-wheel. A small cat took possession of my knee to watch this game. The miller's wife masked the fire with a large cooking pot, whose flames licked its black base like a radiant crown of gold. While the potatoes for my supper boiled under my watchful eye, I passed the time reading in the light of the fire, bowing my head to an English newspaper which lay on the ground between my legs: I saw, printed in large letters, these words: Flight of the King. It was the story of the attempted escape of Louis XVI, and the unfortunate monarch's arrest at Varennes. The newspaper also told of the on-going emigration and the gathering of army officers to the banner of the French princes.

A sudden conversion took place in my mind: *Rinaldo* saw his frailty in the mirror of honor in *Armida's* gardens; whilst not being *Tasso's* hero, the same looking-glass showed me my image in an American orchard. The clash of arms, the tumult of the world, echoed in my ears beneath the thatch of a mill hidden in nameless woods. I interrupted the course of my travels, abruptly, saying to myself: 'Return to France.'

So, what I saw as my duty overthrew my original plans, causing the first of those upheavals that have marked my career. The Bourbons had no need for a younger son from Brittany to return from abroad and offer them his obscure devotion, any more than they have needed his services since he emerged from his obscurity. If I had lit my pipe with the newspaper that changed my life, and gone on with my journey, no one would have noticed my absence; my existence at that time was still invisible, and weighed as little as the smoke from my calumet. A simple dispute between myself and my conscience flung me onto the world stage. I could have done as I pleased, since I was the sole witness to the debate; but of all witnesses, that is the one before whom I most fear to blush.

Why do the solitudes of Erie and Ontario now present themselves to my mind with a charm that my memory of the brilliant spectacle of the Bosphorus lacks? It is because at the time of my voyage to the United States, I was filled with illusions; France's troubles began at the same moment as my adult life; nothing had yet come to fruition in me, or in my country. Those days are dear to me, because they remind me of the innocent feelings inspired by my family and the delights of youth.

Fifteen years later, after my voyage to the Levant, the Republic, swollen with debris and tears, had flowed like a torrent from deluge into despotism. I no longer deceived myself with chimaeras; my memories, finding their future source in society and the passions, were no longer ingenuous. Disappointed in my pilgrimages to West and East, I had not discovered the passage to the Pole, I had not won glory on the banks of Niagara where I had sought it, and had left rooted among the ruins of Athens.

Leaving to be an explorer in America, and returning to be a soldier in Europe, I failed to complete the course in either career; an evil genie snatched the marshal's baton and the sword from me, and placed the pen in my hand. Another fifteen years have passed, since in Sparta, gazing at the night sky, I recalled the places that had previously seen my peaceful or troubled sleep: amongst the woods of Germany, on English heaths, on Italian plains, on the high seas, and in the Canadian forests, I had already greeted the same stars I saw shining above the land of Helen and Menelaus. But what did it avail me to complain to the stars, motionless witnesses of my vagrant destiny? One day their gaze will cease to weary itself in following me: meanwhile, indifferent to my fate, I will not ask those stars to exercise a gentler influence over it, nor to offer me whatever of his life the traveller leaves behind in the places he visits.

If I were to see the United States again, today, I would no longer recognize them: where I left forests, I would find cultivated fields; where I cleared a path through the wilds, I would travel on highroads; among the Natchez, in place of *Céluta's* hut, stands a town with around five thousand inhabitants; Chactas today might be a deputy to Congress. I recently received a pamphlet printed among the Cherokees, which is addressed, in the interest of those savages, to me, as a defender of the liberty of the press.

Among the Muskogees, the Seminoles, the Chickasaws there is a new city of Athens, another Marathon, another Carthage, another Memphis, another Sparta, another Florence; you find a District of Columbia, and a county of Marengo: the glory of every country has given its name to those same wilds where I met Father *Aubry* and the obscure *Atala*. Kentucky has its Versailles; a territory called Bourbon has Paris as its capital.

All the exiles, all the oppressed who fled to America carried there the memory of their homeland.

*...falsi Simoentis ad undam  
Libabat cineri Andromache.*

*(...by the waters of a second Simois,  
Andromache made offering to those ashes.)*

The United States offer, at their heart, under the protection of liberty, an image and a memory of most of the famous places of antiquity and modern Europe: in his garden in the Roman countryside, Hadrian had the monuments of his empire replicated.

Thirty-three highways leave Washington, as in the past the Roman roads radiated from the Capitol; in their ramifications they reach the circumference of the United States, and trace out a circuit of 25,747 miles. On a great number of these routes, post stations have been set up. You take the stagecoach for Ohio or for Niagara, as in my day you employed a guide or an Indian interpreter. The methods of transport have multiplied: lakes and rivers exist throughout the country, linked together by canals; you can voyage

along beside the dirt tracks in boats with oars or sails, or in horse-drawn barges, or in steamboats. Fuel is inexhaustible, since immense forests hide surface coal mines.

The population of the United States increased every ten years, between 1790 and 1820, at a rate of thirty-five per cent. One assumes that by 1830 it will be twelve million eight hundred and sixty-five thousand. If it continues doubling every twenty-five years, in 1855 it will be twenty-five million seven hundred and fifty thousand, and twenty-five years later, in 1880, it will pass fifty million.

That human sap makes every region of the wilderness flower. The Canadian lakes, formerly free of sails, today resemble dockyards, where frigates, corvettes, cutters, and barks, encounter Indian dugouts and canoes, as the great ships and galleys mingle with pinks, rowboats and *caiques* in the waterways of Constantinople.

The Mississippi, the Missouri, and the Ohio are not left to flow in solitude: three-masters sail them; more than two hundred steam-boats enliven their shores.

This immense interior navigation system, which was alone enough to ensure the prosperity of the United States, does not inhibit them from distant voyages. Their vessels sail on every sea, indulge in every kind of trade, flying the star-spangled banner of the west, along those rivers of the east which have never known servitude.

To complete this amazing picture, their cities must be represented, such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans, brilliant at night, full of horses and coaches, adorned with cafes, museums, libraries, dance-halls and theatres, offering all the delights of luxury.

However, it is no use seeking in the United States that which distinguishes man from the other creatures of creation, that which is his share of immortality and the ornament of his days: literature is unknown in the new Republic, though it may have been called for by a host of organizations. The American has replaced intellectual action with direct action; do not attribute his mediocrity in the arts to any inferiority, since he has not directed his attention to that sphere. Flung by various forces onto uncultivated soil, agriculture and commerce have been his projects of necessity; before reflecting, one must live; before planting trees, one must fell them, in order to plough. The first colonists, their minds full of religious controversy, carried, it is true, passionate dispute into the heart of the forests; but they were first forced to go and conquer the wilderness, axe on shoulder, having for pulpit, in the interval between their labors, only the elm they were hewing. Americans have not passed through all the stages of history of other nations; they have left behind in Europe their childhood and youth; the naive babbling of the cradle was unknown to them; they have only been able to enjoy the sweetness of home through their regret for a homeland they have never seen, mourning the eternal absence of charms of which they have been told.

In the new continent there is no classic literature, no romantic literature, and no Indian literature: as to the classics, Americans have had no Middle Ages; as to the Indians, Americans scorn the savages and have a horror of the woods as if they were a prison to which they were destined.

So, there is then no separate literature, literature as properly identified, to be found in America: it is applied literature, the servant of various social needs; it is the literature of workmen, merchants, sailors,

ploughmen. Americans barely succeed others than in engineering and the sciences, because the sciences are a material field of study: Franklin and Fulton seized on electricity and steam as useful to mankind. It has fallen to America to acquaint the world with the discovery by means of which no continent henceforth can escape the search of navigators.

Poetry and imagination, shared by a very small number of idlers, are regarded in the United States as are the childishness of the first and last ages of life: Americans have never experienced childhood: they have not yet known old age.

From this it follows that those men engaged in serious study have necessarily had to be involved in the affairs of their country in order to acquire knowledge of it, and that they have likewise been forced to be agents of revolution. But a sad thing is to be noted: the swift decline of talent, between the first men to be involved in America's unrest, and the men of the present day; and yet these men have been in contact. The first Presidents of the Republic had simple, religious, noble and calm characters, which one finds no trace of in the bloody fracas of our Republic and Empire. The wilderness with which Americans were surrounded has affected their nature; they achieved their liberty in silence.

The farewell speech General Washington addressed to the people of the United States might have been made by one of the gravest characters in history:

*'How far in the discharge of my official duties,' said the General, 'I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records and other evidences of my conduct must witness to you and to the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is, that I have at least believed myself to be guided by them....Though, in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that, after forty five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.'*

Jefferson, in his house at Monticello, wrote, after the death of one of his two children:

*'The loss I have sustained is truly great. From others may be taken what they possess in abundance; but I, of my simple store, I have to regret the half. The decline of my days is supported only by the feeble thread of a human life. Perhaps I am destined to see this last tie of a father's affection broken!'*

Philosophy, rarely touching, is here in sovereign degree. And it is not the inessential grief of a man who was uninvolved with things: Jefferson died on the 4th July 1826, in his eighty-fourth year, and the fifty-fourth year of his country's independence. His remains rest, covered by a stone, with an epitaph that contains the words: *'Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence.'*

Pericles and Demosthenes had pronounced the funeral oration of young Greeks fallen for the sake of a people that vanished soon after them: Brackenridge, in 1817, celebrated the death of young Americans whose blood had given birth to a people.



There is a four-volume octavo 'national gallery' of portraits of distinguished Americans, and what is most remarkable is that it contains biographical material on over a hundred of the principal Indian chiefs. Logan, chief of the Mingos, uttered these words, to Lord Dunmore: '*Colonel Cresap, last spring without provocation murdered all the relatives of Logan...there runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This it is that has called on me for vengeance. I have sought it; I have killed many...Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one.*'

Without loving Nature, Americans have applied themselves to the study of natural history. Townsend, starting from Philadelphia, has journeyed on foot through the regions which separate the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Thomas Say, traveller in the Floridas and the Rocky Mountains, has given us a work on American entomology. Wilson, weaver become author, has published his part-finished engravings.

Speaking now of true literature, however slight it may be, there are a few writers to mention perhaps, among the novelists and poets. The son of a Quaker, Brown, is the author of Wieland, which is the source and model for novels of the new school. As opposed to his compatriots: '*I would rather,*' says Brown, '*wander through the forests than thresh corn.*' Wieland, the hero of the novel, is a Puritan whom the Deity has commanded to kill his wife: "*I brought thee hither,*" he says "*to fulfil a divine command. I am appointed thy destroyer, and destroy thee I must.*" Saying this I seized her wrists. She shrieked aloud, and endeavored to free herself from my grasp... "*Wieland...Am I not thy wife? And wouldst thou kill me? Thou wilt not...Spare me – spare...*" Till her breath was stopped she shrieked for help – *for mercy.*' Wieland strangles his wife and experiences ineffable delight by the dead body. The horror of our modern inventions is here surpassed. Brown was influenced by reading Caleb Williams, and in Wieland he imitates a scene from Othello.

Today, the American novelists, Cooper and Washington Irving, are forced to take refuge in Europe to find a publisher and a public. The language of the great English writers is creolized, provincialized, barbarized, without gaining anything in vigor in the midst of virgin nature; they have been obliged to draw up catalogues of American expressions.

As for American poets, their language is agreeable; but they amount to little more than the common run. However, *Ode to the Evening Breeze*, *Sunrise on the Mountain*, *The Torrent*, and a few other poems merit attention. Halleck has sung of the dying Bozzaris, and George Hill has wandered among the ruins of Greece: '*O Athens!*' he writes, '*t'is you then, solitary Queen, Queen dethroned! ...Parthenon, king of temples, you have seen monuments, contemporary with you, let time denude them of their priests and gods.*'

It pleases me, a traveller myself to the shores of Hellas and Atlantis, to hear the independent voice of a land unknown to antiquity mourning the old world's lost liberty.

## BOOK VIII

### CHAPTER 5

#### Potential risks for the United States

But will America maintain its form of government? Will the States dissolve? Has not a deputy from Virginia already supported the concept of ancient liberty, co-existent with slavery the product of paganism, against a deputy from Massachusetts, defending the cause of modern freedom without slavery, such as Christianity has engendered?

Are not the northern and southern States opposed in spirit and interest? Would not the western States, so far from the Atlantic, prefer a separate regime? Besides, if the power of the Presidency is increased, will despotism not appear with the protections and privileges of dictatorship?

The isolation of the United States has permitted their birth and growth: it is doubtful whether they could have survived and flourished in Europe. The Swiss Federation exists in our midst: why? Because it is small, poor, a cluster of cantons in the heart of the mountains: a nursery of soldiers for kings, the object of walks for travellers.

Separated from the ancient world, the population of the United States still inhabits a wilderness; its wilds have guaranteed its freedom: but already its conditions of existence are altering.

The presence of democracies in Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Buenos Aires, unstable as they are, is a danger. While the United States had nothing closer to them than the colonies of a transatlantic kingdom, any kind of serious conflict was unlikely; is rivalry not now the greatest fear? When there is a rush to arms on all sides, when the military spirit grips those children of Washington, a great leader might rise to the throne: glory loves crowns.

I have said the northern, southern and western States have divided interests; each knows it: shattering the union, will they dissolve it by force of arms? Then, what can quell the enmities that spread through the body politic! Will the dissident States assert their independence? Then, what discord will not erupt among those emancipated States! Those republics beyond the seas, decoupled, will form mere debilitated atoms of no weight in the social balance, or will be successively subjugated by one amongst them. (I set aside the difficult question of alliances and foreign intervention). Kentucky, inhabited by a more rural, tougher, more military people, seems destined to be the conquering State. In that State which shall devour the others, the power of one will soon rise above the ruins of the power of all.

I have spoken of the danger of war: I must mention the dangers of a lengthy peace. The United States, since their emancipation, have enjoyed, except for only a few months, the most profound tranquility: while a hundred battles embroiled Europe, they cultivated their fields in harmony. From that came an increase in population and wealth, with all the disadvantages of a surplus of wealth and population.

If hostilities occur in a peaceable nation, how will they be countered? Will riches and custom be ready to make sacrifices? How to forego life's tender usages, comforts, and indolent well-being? China and India, cushioned in silk, have constantly been subject to foreign domination. What suits the constitution of a free

society is a state of peace tempered by war, and a state of war moderated by peace. The Americans have already borne the olive wreath for too long: the tree which provides it is not native to their shores.

The mercantile spirit is beginning to possess them; self-interest with them is becoming a national vice. Already, the interplay among the banks of various States is hindering them, and bankruptcies threaten the communal wealth. As long as freedom makes money, an industrialized republic performs prodigies; but when the money is spent or exhausted, it loses its love of that liberty not founded on moral feeling, but rising from the thirst for profit and a passion for industry.

Moreover, it is difficult to create a country from States which have no community of religion or interests, which, arising from diverse sources at diverse times, exist on different soils and under different suns. What connection is there between a Frenchman from Louisiana, a Spaniard from the Floridas, a German from New York, or an Englishman from New England, Virginia, the Carolinas, or Georgia, all supposed Americans? This one is a nimble duelist; that one is Catholic, idle and proud; this one is a Lutheran, a ploughman owning no slaves; that one a Puritan merchant; how many centuries would it take to render these elements homogenous!

An aristocratic capitalist is ready to emerge, in love with distinctions and with a passion for titles. One might imagine that there is only one common class in the United States: that is a complete error. There are social groupings which scorn each other and never appear together; there are salons where the haughtiness of the host surpasses that of a German prince with sixteen quarters in his coat of arms. These noble plebeians aspire to caste, despite the progress made by the enlightened men who made them free and equal. Some of them speak of nothing but their ancestry, proud barons, bastards apparently and companions of William the Bastard. They display blazons of chivalry from the old world, decorated with snakes, lizards and parakeets from the new. A younger son from Gascony, landing with cloak and umbrella on the Republican shore, if he takes care to call himself marquis, is well thought of on the steamboats.

The enormous inequalities of wealth are an even more serious threat to the spirit of equality. Some Americans possess one or two millions in income; also, the Yankees of high society no longer live as Franklin did: the true gentleman, disgusted with the newness of his country, travels to Europe to seek the old; you meet him in the inns, engaged like the English, with extravagance or spleen, on his Italian tour. These prowlers from the Carolinas or Virginia purchase ruined abbeys in France, and plant, at Melun, English gardens full of American trees. Naples sends its singers and perfumers to New York; Paris its fashions and its strolling players; London its bellboys and boxers: exotic delights which make the Union no happier. They amuse themselves there by leaping into Niagara Falls, to the applause of fifty thousand planters, semi-savages that death itself can scarcely make smile.

And what is extraordinary, is that at the same time that inequality of wealth increases and an aristocracy is forming, the great egalitarian impulse beyond them obliges the owners of industry or land to hide their luxury, conceal their wealth, for fear of being set upon by their neighbors. They do not recognize the executive power; they drive out, at will, the local authorities they have chosen, and substitute new authorities for them. It does not disturb the social order; democracy is observed in practice, while they laugh at the laws decreed, in theory, by that same democracy. Family spirit barely exists; as soon as the child is fit for work, he must, like a bird with its feathers, fly with his own two wings. From the

emancipated generations swiftly orphaned, and the immigrants arriving from Europe, bands of nomads are created who clear the ground, dig the canals, and exercise their industry everywhere without becoming attached to the soil; they construct houses in the wilderness in which the passing traveller stays for scarcely a few days.

A cold hard egoism rules the towns; dollars and *piastres*, banknotes and cash, the rise and fall of stocks, is the whole of their conversation; you would imagine yourself in the Bourse, or the counting-house of some great store. The newspapers, of huge dimensions, are full of business discussions or coarse prattle. Do Americans suffer, without knowing it, the laws of a climate where vegetable nature seems to have profited at the expense of animal nature, a law opposed by distinguished men, but whose refutation has not been put absolutely beyond question? One might enquire if the American has not become used too early to philosophic freedom, as the Russian to civilized despotism.

In summary the United States give the impression of a colony and not a mother-country: they have no past, their customs have been created by laws. These citizens of a New World took their place among the nations at the moment when political ideas were in the ascendancy: that explains why they transformed themselves at an extraordinary speed. A permanent society seems to have become impractical for them, on the one hand through the extreme *ennui* of individuals, on the other by the impossibility of remaining in one place, and by the necessity of movement that possesses them: for one is never rooted where the household gods stray. Placed in the path of the oceans, owning progressive opinions as new as his country, the American seems to have received from Columbus a mission aimed more at discovering other universes than creating them.

## BOOK VIII

### CHAPTER 7

#### Return to Europe - Shipwreck

London, April to September 1822.

Returning from the wilderness to Philadelphia, as I have already said, and having written on the road, in haste, what I have just related, like La Fontaine's *Old Man*, I failed to find the bills of exchange waiting for me that I had expected; that was the start of the financial difficulties in which I have been submerged throughout my life. *Fortune* and I took a dislike to each other at first sight. According to Herodotus, certain Indian ants gathered heaps of gold: while Athenaeus claims the sun gave Hercules a golden vessel to carry him to the island of Erytheia, home of the Hesperides; and though I am, I have not the honor to belong to the great Indian family, and sailor though I am, I have never crossed the sea in other than a wooden barque. It was a boat of this kind that carried me from America back to Europe. The captain allowed me to take passage on credit. On the 10th of December 1791, I embarked, along with several of my countrymen, who, for diverse reasons, were returning as I was to France. The ship's destination was Le Havre.

A westerly gale caught us at the mouth of the Delaware, and drove us across the Atlantic in seventeen days. Often running under bare poles, we were scarcely able to heave-to. The sun never showed itself. The ship, steered by dead-reckoning, flew before the waves. I crossed an ocean in shadow; to me it had never looked so sad. I myself, even sadder, was returning disappointed from my first foray into life: '*One cannot build a palace on the sea,*' says the Persian poet Farid ud-Din. I felt a vague heaviness of heart, as at the approach of a great misfortune. Gazing out over the waves, I asked them to prophesy my fate, or wrote, more troubled by their motion than disturbed by their threat.

Far from dropping, the gale increased in strength the nearer we came to Europe, but with a steady pressure; the uniformity of its rage produced a kind of furious calm in the livid sky and leaden sea. The captain unable to measure the sun's altitude, was uneasy; he climbed into the shrouds, and swept the horizon with a telescope. A look-out was sent to the bowsprit, another to the top of the mainmast. The sea turned choppy, and the waves changed color, signs that we were approaching land, but what land?

I spent two nights walking the deck, the waves slapping in the darkness, the wind moaning in the rigging, and the sea leaping as it swept to and fro over the deck; all around us was a riot of waters. Wearied by the buffeting, on the third night I went below early. The weather was foul; my hammock rocked and creaked at the impact of the waves, that breaking over the vessel, shook its very fabric. I soon heard crewmen running from one end of the deck to the other, and coils of rope being hurled down: I experienced the motion one feels when a ship begins to tack. The hatch over the between-deck ladder was opened, and a terrified voice called for the captain: that voice, in the midst of night and tempest sounded dreadful. I strained my hearing; I thought the sailors were discussing the cast of the coast. I leapt from my hammock; a wave broke into the stern castle, flooding the captain's cabin, overturning tables, beds, chests and firearms, and rolling them about pell-mell; I gained the deck, half-drowned.

As my head emerged from the hatchway, I was struck by a sublime sight. The ship had tried to put about; but unable to accomplish it, had been embayed by the wind. By the light of the half-moon, which sailed

out of the clouds only to plunge into them again, we could see, through the yellow fog, a coast bristling with rocks, on either side of the ship. The sea was swollen with mountainous waves, throughout the channel which had swallowed us; now they would blossom in spume and spray; now they would present an oily, vitreous surface, mottled with black, coppery, or greenish stains, according to the colors of the depths over which they roared. For two or three minutes, the moans of the abyss and those of the wind would be confused; a moment after, we could distinguish the swirling currents, the hissing of the reefs, the noise of the distant surge. From the ship's hold came sounds that made the hearts of the bravest sailors beat faster. The prow of the vessel cut the dense mass of water with a dreadful roar, and torrents of seething water flowed past the rudder, as at the opening of a sluice. In the midst of this uproar, nothing was as alarming as a dull murmur, like that from a vase filling with water.

Lit by a lantern, and held down by weights, sailing-books, charts and log-books were spread out on a chicken-coop. A squall had extinguished the binnacle lamp. Everyone disagreed about the land. We had entered the Channel, without being aware of it; the ship, staggering under every wave, was drifting between Guernsey and Alderney. Shipwreck seemed inevitable, and the passengers grasped hold of whatever valuables they had in order to save them.

There were French sailors among the crew; one of them, in the absence of a chaplain, intoned that hymn to *Our Lady of Saving Goodness*, the first thing I learnt as a child; I sang it again in sight of the Brittany coast, almost under my mother's eyes. The American Protestant sailors joined enthusiastically in the hymn sung by their French Catholic messmates: danger teaches men their weakness and unites them in prayer. Passengers and sailors were all on deck, clinging to the rigging, the planking, the capstan, or the anchor flukes, to avoid being swept away by the sea, or hurled overboard by the rolling of the ship. The captain shouted for; 'An axe! An axe!' to cut away the masts; and the rudder, its tiller abandoned, swung from side to side, with a harsh creaking sound.

There was one thing left to try: the lead now registered only four fathoms above a sand bank that crossed the channel; it was possible the flood might carry us over the bank and into deep water: but who had the courage to take the helm and take charge of our common safety? One false turn of the tiller, and we were done for.

One of those men thrown up by the course of events, one of those spontaneous children of peril, appeared: a sailor from New York took the place abandoned by the steersman. I seem to see him still, in shirt and canvas trousers, bare-footed, hair drenched and tangled, grasping the tiller in his strong hands, while he looked back over the stern for the wave which would save or sink us. Here came that wave, the width of the channel, tall and rolling along without breaking, as if one sea were invading another's domain: great, white birds flew steadily before it like birds of death. The ship touched and held fast, there was complete silence; every face blanched. The swell arrived: at the moment it reached us, the sailor put down the helm; the vessel, about to fall on her side, lifted us over. The lead was heaved: it registered twenty-seven fathoms. A cheer rose to the heavens and we joined in the shout of: 'Long live, the King!' God did not hear that prayer for Louis XVI; it benefited us alone.

Clear of the two islands, we were still not out of danger; we could get no higher than the coast at Granville. At last the ebbing tide carried us out and we doubled the cape of La Hague. I experienced no fear during this near shipwreck and felt no joy on being saved. It is better to depart life while young than

be evicted by time. Next day, we entered Le Havre. The whole population had turned out to greet us. Our top-masts were shattered, our longboats lost, the quarter-deck razed, and we shipped water with every pitch of the vessel. I climbed down onto the jetty. On the 2nd January 1792, I again trod my native soil which would soon slide from beneath my feet. I brought no Eskimos from the Polar Regions with me, only two savages of an unknown race: *Chactas* and *Atala*

**End of Book VIII**

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 1

I go to seek my mother at Saint-Malo – The progress of the Revolution – My marriage

London, April to September 1822. (Revised December 1846)

I wrote to my brother, in Paris, giving the details of my crossing, explaining my motives for returning, and begging him to lend me the necessary sum to pay for my passage. My brother replied that he had forwarded my letter to our mother. Madame de Chateaubriand did not keep me waiting, she sent what was needed, to settle my debt and leave Le Havre. She told me Lucile was with her, as well as my uncle Bedée and his family. This news persuaded me to go to Saint-Malo, where I could consult my uncle on the question of my proposed emigration.

Revolutions, like rivers, grow greater along their course; I found the one I had left behind in France vastly increased and overflowing its banks; I had left it with Mirabeau under a Constituent Assembly, and found it again with Danton under a Legislative Assembly.

The Declaration of Pillnitz, of 27th August 1791, had become known in Paris. On the 14th December 1791, while I was in the midst of the storm at sea, the King announced that he had written to the princes of the German states (in particular to the Elector of Trèves) concerning German armament. Louis XVI's brothers, the Prince de Condé, Monsieur de Calonne, the Vicomte de Mirabeau, and Monsieur de Laqueuille were almost immediately declared traitors. Following the 9th of November a previous decree had struck at the other émigrés: it was among the ranks of those already proscribed that I was hastening to establish myself; others might perhaps have backed away, but the greatest threat always makes me join the weakest side: to me the victor's pride is insufferable.

Travelling from Le Havre to Saint-Malo, I had the opportunity to witness the divisions and misfortunes of France: mansions were burnt out or abandoned; the owners, to whom symbolic distaffs had been sent, had left; their womenfolk were living as refugees in the towns. Hamlets and market towns groaned beneath the tyranny of clubs affiliated to the central Club des Cordeliers, later merged with the Jacobins. Its rival, the Société Monarchique or Société des Feuillants, no longer existed; the ignoble nickname of sans-culottes had become popular; the King was never spoken of except as Monsieur Veto or Monsieur Capet.

I was received tenderly by my mother and my family, though they deplored the inopportune timing of my return. My uncle, the Comte de Bedée, was preparing to cross to Jersey with his wife, son and daughters. There was a question of how to find the money for me to join the Princes. My voyage to America had made a hole in my fortune; my property as a younger son had been virtually annihilated by the suppression of feudal rights: the benefices which would have become due to me by virtue of my affiliation to the Order of Malta, had fallen into the hands of the Nation along with the rest of the Clergy's wealth. This combination of circumstances led to the most serious event of my life: I was married off, in order to provide me with the means to go and get killed, for the sake of a cause I did not love.



There lived in retirement at Saint-Malo, a certain Monsieur de Lavigne, a Knight of Saint-Louis, and former Commander of Lorient. The Comte d'Artois had stayed at his house in that town when he visited Brittany: delighted with his host, the Prince promised to grant him any favor he might ask in the future.

Monsieur de Lavigne had two sons. One of them married Mademoiselle de la Placelière. The two daughters born of this marriage lost both father and mother at an early age. The elder married the Comte du Plessix-Parscau, a Navy captain, the son and grandson of admirals, a commodore now himself, a Knight of the Order of Saint-Louis and commander of the Navy cadet corps at Brest. The younger, who lived with her grandfather, was seventeen when I arrived at Saint-Malo on my return from America. She was pale, delicate, slim and very pretty; she allowed her lovely blonde hair to hang down in natural curls, like a child. Her fortune was estimated at five or six hundred thousand francs.

My sisters took it into their heads to make me marry Mademoiselle de Lavigne, who had become very attached to Lucile. The affair was conducted without my knowing. I had scarcely seen Mademoiselle de Lavigne two or three times; I recognized her far off on Le Sillon, by her pink pelisse, white dress and her fair wind-blown hair, while I was on the beach, abandoning myself to the caresses of my old mistress, the sea. I felt I lacked every qualification for being a husband. All my illusions were alive, nothing in me was exhausted; the very energy of my being had redoubled on my travels. I was tormented by my Muse. Lucile loved Mademoiselle de Lavigne and saw this marriage as my means to a private fortune: 'Go ahead, then!' I said. In me, the public man is immovable, while the private man is at the mercy of whoever wishes to seize hold of him, and to avoid an hour's trouble I would become a slave for a century.

The consent of Mademoiselle de Lavigne's grandfather, her paternal uncle, and her principal relatives was easily obtained; there remained a maternal uncle, Monsieur de Vauvert, to be won over; a great democrat, he opposed his niece's marrying an aristocrat like me, who was not one at all. We thought we could ignore him, but my pious mother insisted that the religious ceremony should be performed by a Nonjuring priest, and that could only be done in secret. Monsieur de Vauvert knew this, and let loose the law on us, on the grounds of rape, and violation of the code, asserting that the grandfather, Monsieur de Lavigne, had fallen into his second childhood. Mademoiselle de Lavigne became Madame de Chateaubriand, without my having had any communication with her, was taken away in the name of the law and placed in the convent of La Victoire at Saint-Malo, pending the decision of the courts.

In all of this there was no rape, no violation of the law, no risk, and no love; the marriage only possessed the worst aspect of a novel: the truth. The case was tried, and the tribunal judged the civil union valid. Since the parents on both sides were in agreement, Monsieur de Vauvert dropped the proceedings. The constitutional priest, generously bribed, withdrew his objection to the original marriage blessing, and Madame de Chateaubriand left the convent, where Lucile had immured herself with her.

I had a new acquaintance to make, and it brought me all I might desire. I doubt whether a more acute mind than my wife's has ever existed: she divines the birth of a thought or a word behind the brow or on the lips of the person she is talking to: it is impossible to deceive her. Of an original and cultivated spirit, writing in the most piquant style, telling a story to perfection, Madame de Chateaubriand admires me without having read two lines of my works; she would be afraid of meeting ideas other than her own, or discovering that there is too little enthusiasm for my merits. Though a passionate critic, she is well-informed and a good judge.

Madame de Chateaubriand's faults, if she has any, flow from the superabundance of her virtues; my own very real faults stem from the sterility of mine. It is easy to possess resignation, patience, a general willingness to oblige, and an even temper, when one takes to nothing, is bored with everything, and when one replies to ill-luck as to good with a desperate and despairing: 'What does it matter?'

Madame de Chateaubriand is better than me, though less easy to deal with. Have I been blameless towards her? Have I granted my companion all the attention she deserved and which should have been hers? Has she ever complained? What happiness has she tasted in return for an affection which has never wavered? She has shared my misfortune; she has been plunged into the prisons of the Terror, the persecutions of Empire, the difficulties of the Restoration, and has never known the joys of motherhood to counterbalance her sorrows. Deprived of children, whom a different marriage might have granted her, and which she would have loved to distraction; receiving none of the honors and affection of the mother of a family, which console a woman for the loss of her best years, she has advanced, barren and solitary, towards old age. Often separated from me, disinclined towards literature, the pride of bearing my name has been no compensation to her. Fearful and trembling for me alone, her anxieties, constantly renewed, rob her of sleep and the time to cure her ills: I am her chronic infirmity and the cause of her relapses. How could I compare the occasional impatience she has shown towards me with the worry I have caused her? How could I set my good qualities such as they are alongside her virtue which feeds the poor, which has created the Marie-Thérèse Infirmary, despite every obstacle? What are my labors compared with the good works of that Christian woman? When we both appear before God, it is I who will be condemned.

All in all, when I consider my imperfect nature in its entirety, is it certain that marriage has harmed my life? Without doubt I would have had more leisure and repose; I would have been more welcome in certain social groupings and among certain of the world's grandeurs; but in politics, if Madame de Chateaubriand has annoyed me, she has never thwarted me, since in that field, as in affairs of honor, I judge only as I feel. Would I have produced a greater number of works if I had remained single, and would those works have been better? Have there not been circumstances, as we will see, where, marrying outside France, I would have stopped writing and renounced my country? If I had not married, might my weaknesses not have left me prey to some unworthy creature? Might I not have wasted and muddled my days like Lord Byron? Now that I am burdened with years, all my follies are past; only emptiness and regrets remain: an old widower without value, whether deceived or undeceived; an old bird repeating my hackneyed song for those who do not listen. Allowing my desires full rein would not have added a single string more to my lyre, a single tender tone more to my voice. My constrained feelings and the mystery of my thoughts have added perhaps to my powers of expression, have animated my works with inner fever, a hidden flame, which would have been dissipated by the free air of love. Restrained by an indissoluble tie, I have bought, at the cost of a little early bitterness, the sweetness that I taste today. I have only retained the incurable effects of the ills of my existence. I therefore owe a tender and eternal gratitude to my wife, whose attachment to me has been as touching as it has been profound and sincere. She has made my life more weighty, noble, and honorable, always inspiring respect in me, if not always the power to fulfil my duty to her.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 2

Paris – Old and new knowledge – Abbé Barthélemy – Saint-Ange – The Theatre

London, April to September 1822.

I was married at the end of March 1792, and on the 20th April, the Legislative Assembly declared war on Francis II of Germany, who had just succeeded his father Leopold; on the 10th of the same month, Benedict Labre had been beatified in Rome: there you have two worlds. The war precipitated the exit of the remaining nobility from France. On the one hand, persecution intensified; on the other, no Royalist was allowed to remain at home without being thought a coward: it was time for me to head for the camp I had come so far to seek. My uncle Bedée and his family embarked for Jersey, and I left for Paris with my wife and my sisters, Lucile and Julie.

We had taken an apartment, in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, in the cul-de-sac Férou, at the Petit Hôtel de Villette. I hastened to seek out my former friends. I visited again the men of letters whom I had known. Amongst the new faces, I found those of the wise Abbé Barthélemy and the poet Saint-Ange. The Abbé has fashioned his *gynaeceums* in Athens too much in the style of the salons of Chanteloup. The translator of Ovid was a man not lacking in talent; talent is a gift, a specific capability; it may be combined with the other mental faculties, or it may be separate. Saint-Ange provides the proof; he makes great efforts not to be foolish, but can't prevent himself. A man whose pen I admired and continue to admire, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, lacks spirit, and unfortunately his character was on a level with his spirit. How many descriptions are ruined in the *Etudes de la nature* through limited intelligence, and the lack of elevation of the writer's soul!

Rulhière had died suddenly in 1791, before my departure for America. I have since seen his little house at Saint-Denis, with its fountain and pretty statue of Love, at the foot of which one reads these lines:

*'D'Egmont and Love visited this shore:  
An image of her beauty,  
Combing its hair, in the swift wave, I saw:  
D'Egmont is gone; here remains Love only.'*

When I left France, the Paris theatres were still echoing to Le Réveil d'Épiménide and to these couplets:

*'I love the warlike virtue  
Of our brave defenders,  
Yet I hate the fury, too,  
Of bloodthirsty soldiers.*

*In Europe, let us be free  
Formidable, as ever,  
Yet, with generosity,*

*Defending France forever. '*

On my return, there was no longer any question of *Le Réveil d'Épiménide*; and if the couplets had been sung it would have done the author a bad turn. Charles IX had prevailed. The vogue the piece enjoyed was principally due to circumstance; the alarm bell, a people armed with knives, the hatred displayed for king and priests, offered a repetition in camera of the tragedy which was being played out in public. Talma, on his debut, continued his success.

While tragedy reddened the streets, *pastoral* flourished in the theatre; it was not only a matter of innocent shepherds and virginal shepherdesses: fields, streams, meadows, sheep, doves, an age of gold under thatch, were revived to the plaints of the reed-pipe before cooing Tircis, and the simple tricoteuse, arrived, with her knitting, from the spectacle of the guillotine. If Sanson had had time, he might have played the role of *Colin*, and Mademoiselle Théroigne de Méricourt, that of *Babet*. The members of the National Convention pretended that they were the most benign of men: good fathers, good sons, good husbands, they took their little children for walks; they provided them with nursemaids; they shed tender tears at their simple games; they took those little lambs gently in their arms, in order to show them the *horsie* harnessed to the cart that carried the victims to torture. They sang of nature, peace, pity, charity, ingenuousness, and domestic virtue; those cheerful philanthropists severed the necks of their neighbors with extreme sensitivity, for the greater happiness of the human species.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 3

The changing face of Paris – The Cordeliers Club – Marat

London, April to September 1822. (Revised December 1846)

The face of Paris, in 1792, was not that of 1789 and 1790; this was no longer a new-born Revolution; it was that of a nation marching drunkenly to its destiny, across abysses and by errant ways. People no longer appeared excited, curious, or eager; they were menacing. One met only fearful or ferocious figures in the streets, people hugging the walls of houses so as not to be noticed, or roaming in search of their prey: lowered, timorous glances turned away from you, or grim eyes gazed into yours to penetrate and fathom you.

Variety in clothing had ceased; the old world was stepping aside; men had donned the uniform cloak of the new world, a cloak which was as yet merely the last garment of the victims to follow. The social freedoms displayed at France's rejuvenation, the freedoms of 1789, the wild, capricious freedoms of an order of things which is destroying itself and has not yet turned to anarchy, were falling back beneath the scepter of the people: one sensed the approach of a new plebeian tyranny, fecund, it is true and full of hope, but also much more formidable than the decaying despotism of the old monarchy: since the sovereign people, existing everywhere, when it turns tyrant, is a tyrant everywhere; it displays the universal presence of a universal Tiberius.

An alien population of cut-throats from the south mingled with the Parisians; the vanguard of those from Marseilles whom Danton was bringing to Paris for the Tenth of August and the September Massacres, could be recognized by their rags, their bronzed faces, and their air of cowardice and criminality, but crime under a different sun: *in vultu vitium*, with vice in their faces.

I recognized none of the Legislative Assembly: Mirabeau and the earlier idols of the troubles, were either no more, or had lost their sacred status. To pick up the thread of history, broken by my travels in America, it is necessary to resume the story from a little further back.

#### *A Retrospective View*

The flight of the King on the 21st June 1791, forced the Revolution to take an immense step. Brought back to Paris on the 25th of that month, he had been dethroned for the first time, since the National Assembly declared that its decrees would have the force of law, without requiring royal sanction or acceptance. A high court of justice, anticipating the revolutionary tribunal, was established at Orléans. From this moment, Madame Roland, demanded the head of the Queen, thereafter the Revolution would demand hers. The crowd on the Champ-de-Mars had assembled in opposition to the decree which suspended the King from his functions, instead of trying him. His acceptance of the Constitution, on the 14th September, settled nothing. It was a matter of declaring the deposition of Louis XVI; if that had taken place, the crime of the 21st January would not have been committed; the position of the French people altered in relation to the monarchy and *vis-à-vis* posterity. The members of the Constituent

Assembly who opposed his deposition thought to save the crown, and they destroyed it; those who thought to destroy it by demanding the deposition, might have saved it. Almost always, in political matters, the result is the opposite of what is anticipated.

On the 30th of that same month of September 1791, the Constituent Assembly held its last session; the unwise decree of the 17th May previous, which forbade the re-election of outgoing members, created the Convention. Nothing could be more dangerous, more inadequate, more inapplicable to general affairs, than their specific resolutions as individuals or as a body, even though they were honorable.

The decree of the 29th September for the regulation of the popular societies, only served to make them more violent. That was the last action of the Constituent Assembly; it dispersed the next day, and left to France a Revolution.

### *The Legislative Assembly – The Clubs*

The Legislative Assembly, installed on the 1st October 1791, rolled along in that whirlwind which swept up the living and the dead. Disturbances bathed the regions in blood; at Caen, they had their fill of slaughter and ate the heart of Monsieur de Belzunce. The King used his veto to oppose the decree against the émigrés and that which deprived the non-juring priests of all income. These legal actions increased the disturbances. Pétion had become mayor of Paris. The deputies decreed the prosecution of the émigré Princes on the 1st January 1792; on the 2nd, they fixed the beginning of year IV of Liberty as that same 1st of January. Around the 13th of February, red bonnets appeared in the streets of Paris, and the municipality had pikes manufactured. The émigré manifesto appeared on the 1st of March. Austria was armed. Paris was divided into sections, more or less hostile to one another. On the 20th of March 1792, the Legislative Assembly adopted the deathly machine, without which the sentences of the Terror could not have been executed; it was first tried out on corpses, so as to learn its trade on them. One can speak of that instrument as if it were an executioner, since various people, impressed by its excellent service, made presents to it of sums of money, for its maintenance. The invention of that murderous machine, at the very moment when it was needed for crime, is a memorable proof of that intelligence which co-ordinates events, or rather a proof of the hidden action of Providence, when it wishes to change the face of empires.

The minister, Roland, at the instigation of the Girondins, had been summoned to the King's council. On the 20th April, war was declared on the King of Hungary and Bohemia. Marat published *L'Ami du peuple*, despite the decree which had been issued against him. The Royal-Allemand and Berchini regiments deserted. Isnard spoke of the perfidy of the Court. Gensonné and Brissot denounced the Austrian Committee. An insurrection broke out concerning the King's Guard, which was dismissed. On the 28th of May, the Assembly entered permanent session. On the 20th of June, the Tuileries Palace was invaded by crowds from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and Faubourg Saint-Marceau; the pretext was the refusal by Louis XVI to sanction the proscription of priests; the King was at risk of his life. The country was decreed to be in danger. An effigy of Monsieur de Lafayette was burnt. The citizen soldiers of the second federation arrived; those from Marseille, equipped by Danton, were on the way: they entered Paris on the 30th of July, and were quartered by Pétion in the Cordeliers.

### *The Cordeliers*

Alongside the national tribune, two concurrent tribunes were established: that of the Jacobins and that of the Cordeliers, at that time the most formidable, since it contributed members to the famous Paris Commune, and furnished it with the means of action. If the creation of the Commune had not taken place, Paris, lacking a focal point, would have divided, and the different district councils would have become rival powers.

The Cordeliers Club was established in the monastery of that name, a fine in reparation for a murder having provided for the building of the church, in 1259, under Saint Louis; it became, in 1590, a refuge for the most famous of the Leaguers.

There are places which seem to be laboratories for generating factions: '*Notice had been given,*' says L'Estoile (12th July 1593), '*to the Duc de Mayenne, that two hundred Cordeliers had arrived in Paris, furnished with arms and supportive of the Sixteen, who hold council in the Cordeliers of Paris every day...On that day, the Sixteen, assembled at the Cordeliers, discharged their weapons.*' The fanatics of the League have thus yielded the monastery of the Cordeliers, like a mortuary, to our philosophers of revolution.

The pictures, the sculpted or painted images, the veils, the curtains of the monastery had been pulled down; the basilica, gutted, presented to the gaze only its ruined skeleton. In the apse of the church, where the wind and rain entered through rose-windows without glass, carpenters' benches served as the president's office, when a meeting was held in the church. On these benches the red bonnets were deposited, which each orator doffed before mounting the rostrum. The rostrum consisted of four braced struts, with a plank across their X, like a scaffold. Behind the president, next to a statue of Liberty, instruments of ancient justice, so-called, could be seen; many instruments superseded by a single one, a bloodthirsty machine, as complicated mechanisms are replaced by a hydraulic piston. The Jacobin Club when purged borrowed some of these arrangements from the Cordeliers.

### *Orators*

The orators, united in order to destroy, agreed neither on which leaders to choose nor the means to employ; they dealt with beggars, gypsies, thieves, rascals, murderers, to a cacophony of shouts and whistles from their different groups of devils. Their metaphors were derived from articles of murder, borrowed from the filthiest objects, from every species of rubbish heap and dunghill, or drawn from places consecrated to male and female prostitution. Their gestures rendered their imagery palpable; everything was called by its name, with the cynicism of dogs, with an obscene and impious pomp full of oaths and blasphemies. To destroy or create, for death or generation, one only had to interpret that savage argot which deafened the ears. Their harangues, in weak or thunderous voices, were not only interrupted by their opponents: the little black owls, of the cloister without monks and the bell-tower without bells, flew from the broken windows, in hope of spoils; they interrupted the speeches. At first they were called to order by the tinkling of an ineffectual little bell; but since they would not cease their cries, shots were fired at them to ensure their silence: they fell, quivering, fatally wounded, in the midst of the Pandemonium. The fallen timbers, shaky benches, dismantled stalls, fragments of saints overturned and pushed against the walls, served as terraces for the spectators, muddy, dusty, drunk, sweaty, in torn jackets, pikes on shoulders or with bare arms crossed.

The most deformed of that crew obtained preference in speaking. Infirmities of body and soul have played a part in our troubles: pride in suffering has made fine revolutionaries.

### *Marat and his friends*

According to this precedence of hideousness, a series of Gorgon heads, mingling with the ghosts of the Sixteen, passed by in succession. The former doctor to the Comte d'Artois' bodyguard, the Swiss abortion Marat, his bare feet in clogs or iron-rimmed shoes, gave the initial peroration, in virtue of his incontestable right. Appointed to the office of jester at the court of the people, he declaimed, with a dull face, and that half-smile of banal politeness that the old-style education gave to every face: 'People, we must cut off two hundred and seventy thousand heads!' To this Caligula of the crossroads, succeeded the atheistic cobbler, Chaumette. He was followed by the *procureur-général de la lanterne*, Camille Desmoulins, Cicero with a stammer, public advisor to murder, exhausted by solitary debauchery, thoughtless republican of the pun and the witty saying, teller of funereal jokes, who said of the September Massacres, everything has passed off well. He agreed to become a Spartan, as long as the recipe for making black broth was left to Méot the restaurateur.

Fouché, rushing there from Juilly and Nantes, studied disaster under those teachers: in the circle of ferocious and attentive beasts at the foot of the chair, he had the air of a well-dressed hyena. He panted for the imminent flow of blood; he already smelt the incense of the processions of dunces and executioners, waiting the day, when, driven from the Jacobin Club, as a thief, atheist, and assassin, he would be appointed a minister. When Marat was down from his plank, that Triboulet of the masses became the toy of his masters: they mocked him, stamped on his feet, crowded round him shouting, none of which prevented him from becoming the leader of the multitude, from climbing the clock tower of the Hôtel-de-Ville, from sounding the tocsin there for a general massacre, and from triumphing over the revolutionary tribunal.

Marat, like Milton's Sin, was violated by Death: Chénier wrote his apotheosis, David painted him in his bath of blood, while he was compared to the divine author of the Gospels. This prayer was dedicated to him: 'Heart of Jesus, heart of Marat; O sacred heart of Jesus, O sacred heart of Marat!' That heart of Marat had for its ciborium a precious pyxis from the storehouse. In a cenotaph made of turf, erected on the Place du Carrousel, one visited the bust, the bath-tub, the lamp, and the writing-case of this divinity. Then the wind changed: the foul remains, poured from the agate urn into another vessel, were emptied into the sewer.



## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 4

Danton – Camille Desmoulins – Fabre d'Églantine

London, April to September 1822.

The scenes at the Cordeliers, of which I was a witness on two or three occasions, were dominated and presided over by Danton, a Hun the size of a Goth, with a snub nose, flared nostrils, and scarred facial planes, having the look of a policeman joined to that of a cruel and lecherous public prosecutor. In the shell of the church, as in the carcass of the centuries, Danton, with his three male Furies, Camille Desmoulins, Marat and Fabre d'Églantine, organized the September Massacres. Billaud-Varenne proposed setting fire to the prisons and burning all those inside; another member of the Convention voted for drowning all the detainees; Marat declared himself in favor of a general massacre. Danton was beseeched to spare the victims: '*F... the prisoners,*' he replied. Author of the Commune's circulars, he invited free men to repeat in their departments the horrors perpetrated at the Carmelite Convent and the prison of the Abbaye.

Let us have regard to history: Sixtus V equated, for the purposes of man's salvation, the devotion of Jacques Clément to the mystery of the Incarnation, just as they compared Marat to the Savior of the world; Charles IX wrote to the provincial governors that they should imitate the Saint Bartholomew Massacres, just as Danton ordered patriots to copy the September Massacres. The Jacobins were plagiarists; they were such even when sacrificing Louis XVI in imitation of Charles I. Because crimes have been found embedded in a great social movement, it has been imagined, quite wrongly as it happens, that those crimes produced the greatness of the Revolution, of which they are merely a dreadful pastiche: in a fine but sick nature, passionate or systematic spirits have only admired the convulsions.

Danton, more honest than the English, said: '*We will not judge the King, we will kill him.*' He also said: '*These priests, these nobles, are not guilty, but they must die because they are out of place, hindering the movement of events and delaying the future.*' Those words, with the semblance of some terrible profundity, possess no genius: since they assume that innocence is worthless, and the moral order can be removed from the political order without destroying it, which is false.

Danton lacked the conviction of the principals that he maintained; he only rigged himself out in a revolutionary mantle in order to make his fortune. '*Come and yell with us,*' he counselled a young man; '*when you are rich, you can do what you want.*' He confessed that if he had not gone over to the Court, it was because it had not wished to pay enough for him: the effrontery of a mind that knows itself and of a corruption that acknowledges itself as a gaping mouth.

Inferior, even in ugliness, to Mirabeau whose agent he had been, Danton was superior to Robespierre, without having, as he had, given his name to his crimes. He retained a sense of religion: '*We have not,*' he said, '*destroyed superstition in order to establish atheism.*' His passions might have been good ones, for the very reason that they were passions. One must admit the part character plays in the actions of men: those guilty in imagination, like Danton, seem, through the very exaggeration of their words and mannerisms, more perverse than the cold-bloodedly guilty, yet in fact they are less so. This comment

applies equally to the nation: taken collectively, the nation is a poet, an eager author and actor of the part it plays or is made to play. Its excesses are not so much due to an instinctive natural cruelty as to the delirium of a crowd drunk on public spectacle, especially when it is tragic; a thing so true, that in popular horror shows, there is always something superfluous added to the picture and the emotion.

Danton was caught in the trap he set. It did him no good to flick pellets of bread at the noses of his judges, to respond with courage and nobility, to force the tribunal to hesitate, to put the Convention in danger and make it afraid, to reason logically about the hideous crimes by which the very power of his enemies had been created, to cry out, seized by barren repentance: 'It is I who have instituted this infamous tribunal: I ask pardon of God and men!' a phrase that has been borrowed more than once. He should have exposed the infamy before being arraigned by the tribunal.

All that was left to Danton was to show as little pity for his own death as he had for those of his victims, to lift his gaze as high as the suspended blade: as he did. In the theatre of the Terror, where his feet slid in the previous day's blood, after casting a glance of powerful contempt at the crowd, he said to the executioner: 'You will show my head to the people; it is worth the trouble.' Danton's head remained in the executioner's hands, while his headless shade went to join the decapitated shades of his victims: equality, still.

Danton's deacon and sub-deacon, Camille Desmoulins and Fabre d'Églantine, perished in the same manner as their priest.

At that time, when a maintenance allowance was paid to the guillotine, when one wore in the buttonhole of one's jacket, instead of a flower, a little gilt guillotine, or a little piece of flesh from the guillotine; at the time when one shouted: '*Long live Hell!*' When one celebrated the joyful orgies of blood, steel and fury, when one drank to nothingness, when one danced the Dance of Death quite naked, in order not to have the trouble of undressing when going to meet it; at that time, considering everything, what was necessary was to appear at the last supper with the last facetiousness of grief. Desmoulins was invited to Fouquier-Tinville's tribunal: '*What age are you?*' demanded the president. '*The same age as the sans-culotte Jesus,*' replied Camille, jesting. A vengeful obsession forced these cutters of Christian throats to utter endlessly the name of Christ.

It would be unjust to forget that Camille Desmoulins dared to defy Robespierre, and made amends for his errors by his courage. He gave the signal for action against the Terror. A young and charming woman, full of vitality, in proving him capable of love, proved him capable of virtue and sacrifice. Indignation inspired the eloquence of his fearless taunting irony in front of the tribunal; with a noble air he attacked the scaffolds he had helped to raise. Matching his conduct to his words, he did not consent to his torment; he struggled with the executioner in the tumbrel, and arrived at the last abyss half-clothed.

Fabre d'Églantine, author of a play which will last, showed, contrary to Desmoulins, signs of weakness. Jean Roseau, the Paris executioner under the League, hung for having practiced his occupation on behalf of the assassins of president Brisson, could not reconcile himself to the rope. It appears that one does not learn how to die by killing others.

The debates, at the Cordeliers, established for me the fact of a society in the most headlong moment of transformation. I had seen the Constituent Assembly begin the murder of royalty, in 1789 and 1790; I found the corpse of the old monarchy, still almost warm, left in 1792 to its legislative disembowelment: they ripped it apart or dissected it in their low-ceilinged club rooms, as the halberdiers tore and burnt the body of Le Balafré in the cellars of the château of Blois.

Of all the men I recall, Danton, Marat, Camille Desmoulins, Fabre d'Églantine, Robespierre, not one is alive. I met them for a moment on my journey, between a society in America being born, and a dying society in Europe, between the forests of the New World and the solitude of exile: I had experienced only a few months on foreign soil before those lovers of death had already become tired of her. At the distance I now am from those apparitions, it seems to me that having descended into Hell in my youth, I have a confused memory of the worms that I glimpsed crawling on the banks of Cocytus: they complement the various dreams in my life, and have come to have their names inscribed in my annals from beyond the tomb.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 5

#### Monsieur Malesherbes opinion concerning my emigration

London, April to September 1822.

It was a great pleasure for me to meet Monsieur Malesherbes again and talk to him about my former projects. I reported on my plans for a second voyage which would last nine years; I had nothing to do before that but a little trip to Germany: I would hasten to the army of the Princes: I would hasten back to lambaste the Revolution; all that would be over in two or three months. I would hoist sail and return to the New World with a revolution the less and a marriage the more.

However, my zeal was greater than my belief; I felt that the emigration was stupid and a folly: '*Belabored on all sides,*' wrote Montaigne, '*to the Ghibellines I was a Guelph, to the Guelphs a Guibelline.*' My dislike of absolute monarchy left me under no illusions concerning the party I would be choosing: I would preserve my scruples, and though resolved to sacrifice myself for honor's sake, I would adopt Monsieur de Malesherbes opinion regarding the emigration. I found him very animated: the crimes taking place in front of his eyes had made that friend of Rousseau's political tolerance vanish; between the victims' cause and that of the executioners, he did not hesitate. He believed anything would be better than the state of affairs then existing; he thought, in my case in particular, that a man carrying a sword could not avoid joining the brothers of a King, oppressed and delivered up to his enemies. He approved my return to America and urged my brother to go with me.

I offered him the usual objections regarding an alliance with foreigners, the interests of the country etc. He replied; his general reasons became detailed ones, he cited me embarrassing examples. He offered me the Guelphs and the Ghibellines supporting the armies of the Pope and Emperor; in England, the barons, rising against John Lackland. Finally, in our own time, he cited the Republic of the United States, asking for the assistance of France. '*So,*' continued Monsieur de Malesherbes, '*the men most devoted to freedom and philosophy, republicans and Protestants, considered they were free of all guilt in borrowing a force which could grant victory to their party. Without our gold, our ships, and our soldiers, would the New World be free today? I, Malesherbes, I who speak to you, did I not welcome Franklin, in 1776, who came to renew the negotiations initiated by Silas Deane, and was Franklin a traitor? Was American liberty less honorable because it was aided by Lafayette and won by French grenadiers? Any government which, instead of guaranteeing the fundamental laws of society, itself transgresses the laws of equity, the rules of justice, ceases to exist, and returns man to a state of nature. It is then permissible to defend oneself as best one may, to resort to whatever means seem best to overthrow tyranny, and re-establish the rights of each and every one.*'

The principles of natural right, previously articulated by the greatest writers, expanded upon by a man such as Monsieur de Malesherbes, and supported by numerous historical examples, silenced me without convincing me: I only yielded in reality to the events of my age, and a point of honor. –

I will add recent examples, to those examples of Monsieur de Malesherbes: during the Spanish War, in 1823, the French Republican party went to serve under the flag of the Cortes, and had no scruples about carrying arms against their own country; the Polish and Italian Constitutionalists had solicited the help of France in 1830 and 1831, and the Portuguese Chartists invaded their country using foreign money and soldiers. We have two weights and two measures: we approve on behalf of an idea, a system, an interest, a man; that which we censure on behalf of another idea, system, interest or man.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 6

I gamble and lose - An adventure in a fiacre (four-wheeled cab) – Madame Roland – The Gate of L'Ermitage – The Second Federation of the 14th July – Preparations for Emigration

London, April to September 1822.

These conversations with the illustrious defender of the king took place at my sister-in-law's house: she had just given birth to a second son, of whom Monsieur de Malesherbes was the godfather, and to whom he gave the name, Christian. I was present at the baptism of this child, who was only able to know his father and mother at an age when life is without memories, and appears later like a dream that cannot be recalled. The preparations for my departure dragged on and on. My family had thought to arrange a wealthy marriage for me: they found that my wife's fortune was invested in Church securities; the nation undertook to pay them in its own way. Moreover, Madame de Chateaubriand had lent the scrip of a large part of these securities, with the consent of her guardians, to her sister, the Comtesse du Plessix-Parscau, who had emigrated. So money was still lacking; it was necessary to borrow.

A notary obtained 10,000 francs for us: I was taking them home to the Cul-de-sac Férou, in the form of *assignats*, when, in the Rue de Richelieu, I met one of my old friends from the Navarre Regiment, Comte Achard. He was a great gambler; he suggested going to the rooms of a certain Monsieur ... where we might talk: the devil urged me on; I went upstairs, I gambled, I lost all except fifteen hundred francs, with which, full of remorse and confusion, I climbed into the first carriage that came by. I had never gambled before: the play produced a kind of painful intoxication in me; if the passion had seized me completely, it would have turned my brain. Semi-distracted, I left the cab at Saint-Sulpice, and forgot my pocket-book containing the remains of my wealth. I ran home and told them I had left the whole 10,000 francs in the cab.

I went out again, I turned down the Rue Dauphine; I crossed the Pont-Neuf, not without feeling tempted to throw myself into the water, and made my way to the Place du Palais-Royal, where I had taken the wretched cab. I questioned the Savoyards who watered the nags, and described my particular vehicle; indifferently, they gave me a number. The police superintendent for the district informed me that the number belonged to a man who hired carriages, and lived at the top of the Faubourg Saint-Denis. I went to this man's house, and remained in the stables all night, waiting for the fiacres to return: a substantial number of them appeared in succession, none of which was mine; at last, at two in the morning, I saw my chariot enter. I had barely time to recognize my two white steeds, when the poor creatures, exhausted, collapsed in the straw, stiff-legged, their bellies distended, their limbs stretched out as if they were dead.

The coachman remembered having driven me. After dropping me, he had picked up a citizen who had got down at the Jacobins; after the citizen, a lady whom he had taken to Number 13, Rue de Cléry; after the lady, a gentleman whom he had set down at the Récollets in the Rue Saint-Martin. I promised the coachman a tip, and at daybreak, set out myself to discover my fifteen hundred francs, as if in search of the North-West Passage. It seemed clear to me that the citizen of the Jacobins had confiscated them by right of sovereignty. The young lady of the Rue de Cléry claimed she had noticed nothing in the fiacre. I

arrived without hope, at my third address; the coachman gave, as well as he could, a description of the gentleman he had driven. The porter cried: *'That's Père So-and-so!'* He led me through the corridors and empty apartments, to the rooms of a Recollect, who had remained behind alone to make an inventory of his monastery's furniture. This monk, in a dusty frock-coat, sitting on a pile of rubbish, listened to the tale I told: *'Are you,'* he said, *'the Chevalier de Chateaubriand?'* – *'Yes,'* I replied. *'Here is your pocket-book,'* he said; *'I was going to bring it to you when I had finished; I found your address inside.'* It was this monk, hounded and despoiled, engaged in counting conscientiously the relics of his cloister, for those who were banishing him, who restored to me the fifteen hundred francs with which I was going to travel into exile. Lacking this small sum, I could not have emigrated: what would have happened to me? My whole life would have been altered. I would be hanged if I would move a single step today to recover a million.

So passed the 16th June, 1792.

Loyal to my feelings, I had returned from America to offer my sword to Louis XVI, not to become involved with party intrigue. Neither the dismissal of the new King's Guard, in which Murat made one; the successive ministries of Roland, Dumouriez, and Duport du Tertre; the minor Court conspiracies, nor the great popular uprisings, inspired in me anything other than boredom and contempt. I heard Madame Roland spoken of a great deal, but never saw her; her Memoirs show that she possessed an extraordinarily forceful spirit. She was said to be very pleasant; who knows whether she was sufficiently so at that time to make the stoicism of her unnatural virtues bearable. Certainly, a woman who, at the foot of the guillotine, asks for a pen and ink in order to record the last moments of her journey, to record the discoveries she has made in her transit from the Conciergerie to the Place de la Révolution, such a woman shows a preoccupation with the future, a scorn for life of which there are few examples. Madame Roland had character rather than genius: the first may grant a person the second, the second cannot grant the first.

On the 19th of June, I went to the valley of Montmorency, to visit Rousseau's 'Hermitage': not because I wished to recall Madame d'Épinay and that depraved and artificial set; but because I wished to say farewell to the retreat of a man, endowed with a talent whose accents stirred me in my youth, even though his morals were antipathetic to my own. Next day, the 20th of June, I was still at the 'Hermitage'; there I had come across two men taking a walk like me in that same wilderness during that day fatal to the monarchy, indifferent as they were, or might be, I thought, to worldly affairs: the one was Monsieur Maret, of the Empire, the other was Monsieur Barère, of the Republic. The good Barère had come, full of sentimental philosophy, far from the noise, to count the florets of the Revolution in the shadow of Julie. The troubadour of the guillotine, following whose report the Convention decreed that *Terror was the order of the day*, was saved from that Terror by hiding in a basket of heads; from the depths of the tub, under the scaffold, only his croaking of *death* could be heard! Barère was one of those tigers that Oppian caused to be born from a light breeze: *Zephyri vel Favoni aura*: a breath of Zephyr or the West Wind.

Ginguené and Chamfort, those men of letters and my old friends, were delighted by the events of the 20th of June. La Harpe, continuing his lessons at the *Lycée*, shouted with the voice of Stentor: *'Madmen! You reply to every representation the people make: Bayonets! Bayonets! Well! There are your bayonets!'* Though my voyage to America had made me a less insignificant person, I could not rise to such great heights of principle and eloquence. Fontanes was at risk because of his former connections with the *Société Monarchique*. My brother was a member of a club of enragés. The Prussians were on the march

by virtue of the agreement between the Cabinets of Vienna and Berlin; already a fairly hot encounter had taken place between the French and Austrians, near Mons. It was high time to make a decision.

My brother and I procured forged passports for Lille: we would be wine merchants, in the Parisian National Guard, whose uniform we wore, who were setting out to tender for army supplies. My brother's manservant, Louis Poullain, known as Saint-Louis, travelled under his proper name: though from Lamballe, in Lower Brittany, he was going to visit his relatives in Flanders. The day of our emigration was set for the 15th of July 1792, the day after the second Festival of the Federation. We spent the 14th in the Tivoli Gardens, with the Rosanbo family, my sisters and my wife. Tivoli belonged to Monsieur Boutin whose daughter had married Monsieur de Malesherbes. Towards the end of the day, we saw a fair number of federates wandering around, the crowd having dispersed, on whose hats in chalk was written: 'Pétion, or death!' Tivoli, the starting point for my exile, was to become a rendezvous for amusement and entertainment. Our relatives left us without any sadness; they were persuaded we were going on a pleasure-trip. The fifteen hundred francs I had recovered seemed sufficient riches to see me back in triumph to Paris.



## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 7

I and my brother emigrate – Saint-Louis' adventure – We cross the frontier

London, April to September 1822.

On the 15th of July, at six in the morning, we climbed into the diligence: we had booked our seats in the cabriolet, next to the driver; the valet, whom we were not supposed to know, squeezed inside with the other passengers. Saint-Louis was a sleep-walker; in Paris he would go and look for his master during the night, with his eyes open, but fast asleep. He would undress my brother and put him to bed, asleep all the while, replying: '*I know, I know,*' to anything said to him during his attacks, and only waking when cold water was thrown in his face; he was a man of about forty years of age, nearly six foot high, and as ugly as he was tall. This poor fellow, very respectful, had never served any other master than my brother; he was quite worried when he had to sit at table with us for supper. The passengers, great patriots, talked of hanging aristocrats from the lamp-posts which added to his fears. The idea that at the end of it all, he would have to pass through the Austrian Army, to fight in the Army of the Princes, served to turn his brain. He drank heavily, and climbed into the diligence; we returned to our seat.

In the middle of the night, we heard the passengers shouting, with their heads out of the window: '*Stop, driver, stop!*' We stopped, the door of the diligence opened, and immediately men and women's voices cried: '*Out, citizen, out! We can't stand it, out, you swine! He's a brigand! Out, out!*' We got down too. We saw Saint-Louis, pushed and thrown from the coach, getting to his feet, gazing around with wide-open but sleep-filled eyes, set off for Paris, as fast as his legs would carry him, and without his hat. We were unable to acknowledge him, because it would have given us away; we had to abandon him to his fate. Taken and arrested at the first village, he stated that he was Monsieur de Chateaubriand's servant, and lived in Paris, in the Rue de Bondy. The police passed him from one force to the next till he reached President de Rosanbo's house; the unfortunate man's statements served to prove that we had emigrated, and to send my brother and my sister-in-law to the scaffold.

The next morning when the diligence breakfasted, we had to listen to the whole story twenty times over: '*That man's mind was disturbed; he dreamt aloud; he said strange things; he was surely a conspirator, an assassin fleeing from justice.*' The well-bred citizenesses blushed and waved large Constitutional fans of green paper. In their description we readily recognized the effects of somnambulism, fear and wine.

Arriving at Lille, we went in search of the man who would take us across the frontier. The Emigration had its agents of deliverance who ultimately became agents of perdition. The monarchist party was still powerful, the issue undecided; the weak and cowardly served it, while awaiting the outcome.

We left Lille before the gates were closed: we waited in an out of the way house, and did not set off again until ten at night, in complete darkness; we took nothing with us; we carried sticks in our hands; it was less than a year since I had followed my Dutchman in this way through the forests of America.

We crossed cornfields through which ran lightly-marked paths. French and Austrian patrols were scouring the countryside: we might fall in with one or the other, or find ourselves facing a sentry's pistol. We made out solitary horsemen far off, motionless, gun in hand; we heard horses' hooves in sunken lanes; putting our ears to the ground, we heard the steady tramp of marching infantry. After three hours progress, now running, now tiptoeing slowly along, we reached a crossroads in a wood, where a few belated nightingales were singing. A company of Uhlands concealed behind a hedge fell on us with raised sabres. We shouted: '*Officers wishing to join the Princes!*' We asked to be escorted to Tournai, saying we were in a position to establish our identities. The officer in command positioned us between his troopers and led us away.

When day broke, the Uhlands noticed our National Guard uniforms under our greatcoats, and mocked the colors in which France would soon set out to clothe a subjugated Europe.

In the Tournaisis, an ancient kingdom of the Franks, Clovis spent the first years of his reign: he left Tournai with his companions, called as he was to the conquest of the Gauls: '*Their weapons gave them every right*' says Tacitus. Through that town, from which, in 486, the first king of the first race issued to found his powerful and enduring monarchy, I passed, in 1792, to rejoin the Princes of the third race, on a foreign soil, and returned again in 1815, when the last King of the French abandoned the kingdom of the first King of the Franks: *omnia migrant*; everything alters.

Reaching Tournai, I left my brother to struggle with the authorities, and escorted by a soldier I visited the cathedral. Once, Odon d'Orleans, scholar of that cathedral, sitting all night at the door of the church, would teach his disciples the paths of the stars, pointing out to them with his finger the Milky Way and the constellations. I would have preferred to meet that simple astronomer of the eleventh century at Tournai, than the Pandours. I liked those times, when, as the chronicles told me, under the entry for the year 1049, that in Normandy a man was metamorphosed into an ass: which is what was thought to have happened to me, it would appear, when I was with my schoolmistresses, the Couppart sisters. Hildebert, in 1114, had noticed a girl with ears of corn emerging from her own ears: perhaps it was Ceres. The Meuse, which I would soon cross, was suspended in the air in the year 1118, witnessed by Guillaume de Nangis and Albéric. Rigord assures us that, in 1194, between Compiègne and Clermont en Beauvoisis, a tangled hail of rocks fell, bearing coals and starting fires. If the storm, as Gervais de Tilbury assures us, was unable to quench a candle over the window of the Priory of Saint Michael of *Camissa*, we know too, through him, that in the diocese of Uzès there was a pure and lovely fountain, which changed location whenever anything dirty was thrown into it: today's consciences would not trouble about such a small thing. – Reader, I am not wasting your time; I am chattering to you while you wait patiently for my brother to finish his negotiations: here he is; he returns after explaining everything to the satisfaction of the Austrian commandant. We are allowed to travel to Brussels, an exile purchased with too much care.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 8

Brussels – Dinner with the Baron de Breteuil - Rivarol – Departure for the Army of the Princes – The route – Encounter with the Prussian Army – I arrive at Trèves

London, April to September 1822.

Brussels acted as general quarters for the noblest émigrés: the most elegant women of the Paris and the most fashionable men, those who only travelled as aides-de-camp, waited amongst their distractions for the moment of victory. The latter had beautiful and completely new uniforms; they paraded about with all the strictness of frivolity. Considerable sums of money which they could have lived on for several years, they consumed in a few days: there was scarcely any need to economize, since they would soon be in Paris... These shining knights planned for success in love and glory, in the opposite manner to ancient chivalry. They contemplated us contemptuously as we travelled about on foot, our rucksacks on our backs, we minor gentry from the provinces, impoverished officers reduced to being infantrymen. At the feet of their *Omphales*, these Hercules twirled the distaffs they had sent us, and which we had returned to them on arrival, contenting ourselves with our swords.

At Brussels, I found my small amount of luggage, which had been smuggled through in advance of my arrival: it consisted of my uniform from the Navarre Regiment, with my linen and my precious papers, from which I could not bear to be separated.

I was invited to dinner at the Baron de Breteuil's house, with my brother; there I met the Baronne de Montmorency, then young and lovely, and who captivated, at that time, martyred bishops in silk cassocks with golden crosses, young magistrates transformed into Hungarian colonels, and Rivarol, whom I only saw on that one occasion. No one had named him; I was struck by the language of a man who alone held forth, and possessed the right to be heard, like some oracle. Rivarol's wit harmed his talent, his words harmed his pen. *À propos* of revolutions, he said: '*The first blow reaches God, the second only strikes unfeeling marble.*' I had resumed the uniform of a lowly second lieutenant in the infantry; I had to leave at the end of the meal, and my haversack was behind the door. I was still bronzed by American suns and sea air; I had straight, dark hair. My face and my silence bothered Rivarol; the Baron de Breteuil, noticing his uneasy curiosity, satisfied it: '*Where has your brother the Chevalier arrived from?*' he asked my brother. I replied: '*From Niagara.*' Rivarol exclaimed: '*From a Waterfall!*' I fell silent. He hazarded the beginning of a question: '*Monsieur is going...? – To where one fights,*' I interrupted. We all rose from the table.

This fatal emigration was hateful to me; I was in a hurry to meet my peers, *émigrés* like myself, with 600 livres income. We were quite foolish, doubtless, but at least we would draw swords and if we achieved success, it would not be us who profited from the victory.

My brother remained in Brussels, with Baron de Montboissier, whose aide-de-camp he had become; I set out alone for Coblenz.

There is nothing that possesses more history than the road I took; it recalled especially various memories or grandeurs of France. I passed through Liège, one of the municipal republics, which rose so many times against its bishops or the Counts of Flanders. Louis XI, though allied to the people of Liège was forced to sack their town, to escape from his ridiculous prison at Péronne.

I went to meet and join those men of war who pinned their fame on similar events. In 1792, the relations between France and Liège were more peaceable: the Abbé de Saint-Hubert was required to send two hunting dogs a year to the successors of King Dagobert.

At Aix-la-Chapelle, another gift, but on France's part: the mortuary sheet which served for the interment of a most Christian monarch was donated to the tomb of Charlemagne, like a liege's flag to the ruling fief. Our Kings declared their loyalty and paid homage in this manner, when taking possession of the Eternal heritage; they swore, clasping the knees of death, their lady, that they would be faithful to him, after giving him a feudal kiss on the lips. Moreover, it was the only suzerainty to which France considered itself a vassal. The cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle was built by Charles the Great and consecrated by Leo III. Two prelates being absent from the ceremony, they were replaced by two Bishops of Maestricht, long dead, who resurrected themselves expressly. Charlemagne, having lost a beautiful mistress, took her corpse in his arms and refused to be separated from it. His passion was attributed to a charm: the young girl's body was examined, and a little pearl was found beneath her tongue. The pearl was thrown into a marsh; Charlemagne, madly enamored of the marsh, ordered it drained; there he built a palace and a church, in order to spend his life in one, and his death in the other. The authorities for this are Archbishop Turpin and Petrarch.

At Cologne, I admired the cathedral: if it had been finished it would have been the most beautiful Gothic monument in Europe. Monks were the painters, sculptors, architects and masons of their basilicas; they gloried in their title of master mason, *caementarius*.

It is curious today to hear ignorant philosophers and chattering democrats speak out against religion, as if those frocked proletarians, those mendicant orders, to whom we owe almost everything, had been gentlemen.

Cologne put me in mind of Caligula and Saint Bruno: I saw the remains of the dikes built by the first at Baiae, and the empty cell of the second at La Grande Chartreuse.

I followed the Rhine as far as Coblenz (Confluentia). The Army of the Princes was no longer there. I crossed those empty kingdoms, *inania regna*; I saw that lovely Rhine valley, temple of the barbarian muses, where ghostly knights would appear among the ruins of their castles, and one heard the clash of arms at night, when war was at hand.

Between Coblenz and Trèves, I fell in with the Prussian Army: I was passing along the column, when, coming up with the Guards, I saw that they were marching in battle order with canon in line; the king and the Duke of Brunswick were in the center of the square, which was composed of Frederick's old grenadiers. My white uniform caught the king's eye; he sent for me: he and the Duke of Brunswick removed their hats, and saluted the old French Army in my person. They asked me my name, and my regiment, and where I was intending to meet the Princes. This military welcome moved me: I replied with

emotion that learning, in America, of the king's misfortunes I had returned to shed blood in his service. The officers and gentlemen surrounding Frederick William gave a murmur of approval, and the Prussian monarch said: '*Monsieur, one can always recognize the sentiments of the French aristocracy.*' He took off his hat again, and remained uncovered and motionless, until I had disappeared behind the ranks of grenadiers. Nowadays people speak out against the *émigrés*; they are the tigers who clawed at their mother's breast; at the time of which I speak, one followed the old exemplars, and honor counted as highly as country. In 1792, loyalty to one's oath still ranked as a duty; today, it has become so rare it is regarded as a virtue.

A strange encounter, which had already happened to others, almost made me retrace my steps. They would not allow me to enter Trèves, which the Army of the Princes had already reached: '*I was one of those men who wait on events to form their decisions; I should have reported three years previously; I arrived when victory was certain. I was not needed; they already had too many war-hardened braves. Every day, cavalry squadrons deserted; even the artillery was leaving en masse and if that continued, no one would know what to do with those men over there.*'

A wonderfully partisan illusion!

I met my cousin Armand de Chateaubriand: he took me under his wing, gathered the Bretons together and pleaded my cause. They summoned me; I explained my situation: I said that I had arrived from America in order to have the honor of serving with my friends; that the campaign was under way, but scarcely begun, so that I was still in time to face the first shot; that moreover, I would return, if that was demanded, but only after having discovered the reason for this unmerited insult. The business was arranged: as I was a good lad, the ranks opened to receive me, and I was only left with an embarrassment of choices.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 9

The Army of the Princes – The Roman amphitheater - *Atala* – Henry IV and his shirts

London, April to September 1822.

The Army of the Princes was composed of gentlemen, organized by province, and serving as private soldiers: the aristocracy was returning to its origins, and the origin of the monarchy, at the very moment when that aristocracy and that monarchy were ending, like an old man returning to his infancy. There were also brigades of *émigré* officers from various regiments, likewise acting as soldiers once more: among their number were my comrades from the Navarre Regiment, led by their colonel, the Marquis de Mortemart. I was sorely tempted to enlist with La Martinière, even if he were still in love; but Armorican patriotism carried the day. I enrolled in the Seventh Breton Company, commanded by Monsieur de Gouyon-Miniac. The nobles from my province had furnished seven companies; an eighth was added of young men from the Third Estate: the steel-grey uniform of this last company differed from that of the other seven, which was royal blue with ermine facings. Men attached to the same cause and exposed to the same dangers perpetuated their political inequality by means of these odious distinctions: the true heroes were the plebeian soldiers, since there was no personal interest involved in the sacrifices they made.

*An enumeration of our little army:*

The infantry, composed of gentlemen soldiers and officers; four companies of deserters, dressed in the different uniforms of the regiments from which they had come; one artillery company; a few officers from the engineers, with canons, howitzers, and mortars of various calibers (gunners and engineers, almost all of whom espoused the Revolutionary cause, were to be responsible for its widespread success). Excellent cavalymen, consisting of German carabineers, musketeers under the command of the elderly Comte de Montmorin, and naval officers from Brest, Rochefort and Toulon, supported our infantry. The mass emigration of these latter officers plunged the French Navy back into that enfeebled state from which Louis XVI had rescued it. Never, since the days of Dusquesne and Tourville, had our squadrons won greater glory. My comrades were delighted, but I had tears in my eyes, when I saw those dragoons of the ocean pass by, no longer in command of the vessels with which they had humiliated the English and delivered America. Instead of going in search of new continents to bequeath to France, these companions of La Pérouse sank into the German mud. They rode horses dedicated to Neptune; but they had changed element, and the earth was not their natural place. It was in vain that their commander carried, at their head, the tattered flag from the Belle-Poule, the sacred remnant of that white ensign, from whose shreds honor still hung, but victory had fallen.

We had tents; otherwise we lacked everything. Our muskets of German manufacture, worthless weapons, and terribly heavy, dislocated our shoulders, and were often in no fit state to be fired. I went through the whole campaign with one of those muskets whose hammer refused to fall.

We remained at Trèves for two days. It was a great pleasure to me to see the Roman ruins, after having viewed nameless ruins in Ohio, and to visit that town sacked so often that Salvien said of it: *‘Fugitives from Trèves, you desire entertainments, you beg the Emperors again and again for games in the Circus: for what state I ask, what people, what city? Theatra igitur quaeritis, circum a principibus postulatis? Cui, quaeso, statui, cui populo, cui civitati?’*

Fugitives from France, where was that people for whom we wished to restore the monuments of Saint Louis?

I sat down, with my musket, among the ruins; I took from my haversack the manuscript of my American voyage; I arranged the individual sheets on the grass around me; I revised and corrected the description of a forest, a passage from *Atala*, in the remains of a Roman amphitheater, preparing myself in that way for the conquest of France. Then, I put away my treasure, the weight of which, added to that of my shirts, my cloak, my tin mess-can, my demijohn, and my little Homer, caused me to spit blood. I tried ramming *Atala* into my pouch with my useless ammunition; my comrades laughed at me, and pulled at the sheets which stuck out on either side of the leather cover. Providence came to my rescue: one night, after sleeping in a hay-loft, I found on waking that the shirts had vanished from my haversack; the papers had been left behind. I gave thanks to God: chance, while preserving my glory, saved my life, since the sixty pounds that weighed on my shoulders would have made me consumptive. *‘How many shirts have I?’* Henri IV asked his valet, *‘There are still a dozen here, Sire, un-torn. – And handkerchiefs: have I eight? – There are only five at the moment.’* The Béarnais won the battle of Ivry without shirts; I was unable to restore his kingdom to his descendants by losing mine.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 10

A Soldier's life – The last appearance of the old army of France

London, April to September 1822.

The order was given to march on Thionville. We covered more than fifteen miles a day. The weather was atrocious; we tramped through the rain and mud, singing: *Ô Richard! ô mon Roi! or Pauvre Jacques!* On arrival at the camping ground, lacking wagons and provisions, we took our mules, which followed the column like an Arab caravan, to search the farms and villages for something to eat. We paid for everything, scrupulously: however I was put on fatigues for absent-mindedly taking a couple of pears from a château garden. A great steeple, a great river, and a great lord, says the proverb, are bad neighbors.

We pitched our tents at random, and had to keep beating at the canvas to flatten the threads and stop the water getting through. We were ten soldiers to a tent; each man in turn was given the task of cooking; one would fetch meat; another bread, another wood, another straw. I made marvelous soup; I received fulsome compliments, especially when I mixed cabbage and milk into the stew, in Breton fashion. Among the Iroquois I had learnt how to tolerate smoke, so that I bore myself bravely in front of the fire of damp, green branches. A soldier's life is very entertaining; I imagined myself as still among the Indians. Eating our meal under canvas, my comrades asked me for tales of my travels; they repaid me with fine stories of their own; we all told lies like a corporal in a tavern when a conscript is footing the bill.

One thing wearied me, having to wash my clothing; it was often necessary since the obliging thieves had only left me one shirt borrowed from my cousin Armand, plus the one I was wearing. When I cleaned my boots, my handkerchiefs and my shirt by a stream, head down and back in the air, it made me dizzy; the motion of my arms caused an intolerable pain in my chest. I was forced to sit down among the horsetails and water-cresses, and in the midst of military tasks, I amused myself watching the tranquil flow. Lope de Vega presents us with Love's headband washed by a shepherdess; that shepherdess would have been very useful to me as regards a little turban woven from birch that I had from my Floridian ladies.

An army is usually made up of soldiers of the same age; same height, same strength. Ours was quite otherwise, a motley collection of mature men, old men, and youngsters fresh from their dove-cotes, jabbering Norman, Breton, Picard, Auvergnat, Gascon, Provençal and Languedocian. Fathers served with their sons, fathers-in-law with sons-in-law, uncles with nephews, brothers with brothers, cousins with cousins. This gathering, ridiculous as it appeared, had something honorable and touching about it, because it was animated by sincere conviction; it offered a picture of the old monarchy and gave a last glimpse of a dying world. I have seen old noblemen, stern of face, and grey of hair, their coats torn, rucksacks on their backs, muskets over their shoulders, plodding along with the help of a stick, supported under the arm by one of their sons; I have seen Monsieur de Boishue, father of the friend murdered in front of me at the Rennes States, marching sad and alone, his bare feet in the mud, carrying his shoes on the point of his bayonet, for fear of wearing them out; I have seen young men, wounded, lying beneath a tree, while a chaplain in frock-coat and stole knelt by their side, sending them to Saint-Louis, whose heirs they had striven to defend. The whole of this impoverished troop, receiving not a *sou* from the Princes, made war



at its own expense, while the Assembly's decrees completed its despoliation and consigned our wives and mothers to prison.

Old men in former times were less miserable and less isolated than those of today: if, while still on earth, they lost their friends, little else altered around them; strangers to youth, they were not so to society. Now, a straggler in this world not only has to watch men die, but he sees ideas die too: principles, morals, tastes, pleasures, pains, sentiments, nothing resembles what he has known. He ends his days among a different race of the human species.

And yet, France of the nineteenth century, learn to appreciate that former France which would be a match for yours. You will be old in turn and you will be accused, as we might be accused, of clinging to obsolete ideas. You have vanquished your fathers; do not disown them, you are sprung from their blood. If they had not been disinterestedly loyal to ancient ways, you would not have been able to draw on that inborn loyalty to provide the energy which has been the glory of your modern ways; there has merely been, between the two Frances, a transformation of virtue.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 11

The Siege of Thionville begins – The Chevalier de La Baronnais

London, April to September 1822.

Near our obscure and impoverished camp existed another, brilliant and wealthy. At its headquarters, one saw nothing but wagonloads of food; one met none but cooks, valets and aides-de-camp. Nothing could have better symbolized the Court and the provinces, the monarchy expiring at Versailles, and the monarchy dying on Du Guesclin's heaths. The aides-de-camp had become hateful to us; when there was a skirmish outside Thionville, we shouted: 'Forward, the aides-de-camp!' just as the patriots used to shout: Forward, the officers!

I felt a pang, when we arrived one gloomy day in sight of some woods that rimmed the horizon, to be told that those woods were in France. Crossing my country's frontier under arms had an indescribable effect upon me: I had a species of revelation concerning the future, especially since I shared none of my comrades' illusions, neither with the cause they were supporting, nor the expectation of victory with which they deluded themselves; I was like Falkland in the army of Charles I. There was not a Knight of La Mancha, ill, lame, and wearing a nightcap under his three-cornered beaver, but was firmly convinced of putting to flight, unaided, fifty young and vigorous patriots. This honorable and amusing pride, a source of prodigious efforts in another age, had not afflicted me: I was not so convinced of the power of my invincible arm.

We reached Thionville, on the 1st of September, undefeated; since we had met no one on the way. The cavalry encamped on the right, the infantry the left, of the highroad which led from the town towards Germany. From the camping ground, the fortress could not be seen; but six hundred paces further on, a hill-crest could be reached from which one could gaze down into the Moselle valley. The Navy's cavalry linked the right flank of our infantry to the Prince of Waldeck's Austrian corps, while the left flank of the infantry was covered by the eighteen hundred horsemen of the Maison-Rouge, and Royal-Allemand Regiments. We dug a trench to our front, piling our weapons along its whole length. The eight Breton companies occupied two of the 'streets' crossing the camp, and below us my friends the officers of the Navarre company were positioned.

These works, which took three days, being complete, Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois arrived; they made a reconnaissance of the site, which had been fortified in vain, since Wimpfen seemed to want to surrender it. We had not won the battle of Rocroi, as the Grand Condé did, so we could not take Thionville; but we were not beaten beneath its walls, like Feuquières. We camped on the public road, at the top of a village serving as a suburb to the town, beyond the outworks which defended the bridge over the Moselle. We fired from one house into another; our force remained in possession of what it had taken. I was not involved in this first attack; Armand, my cousin, was there and behaved well. While fighting in the village, my company was ordered to establish a battery at the edge of a wood which covered the summit of a hill. On the slope of this hill, vineyards descended to the plain bordering the external fortifications of Thionville.

The engineer who directed us made us raise a turf platform, destined to receive our guns; we dug a parallel ditch, open to the sky, to accommodate us below the cannon shot. This earthwork went slowly, since all of us officers, young and old, were little used to pickaxes and shovels. We lacked wheelbarrows and carried the earth in our uniforms, which served us as sacks. Firing from a lunette opened up on us; it hindered us all the more because we could not reply: two eight-pound canons and a Cohorn mortar, which had a poor range, was all the artillery we had. The first mortar we launched fell short of the glacis; it excited jeers from the garrison. A few days afterwards the Austrian canons and engineers reached us. A hundred infantrymen and a naval cavalry picket relieved the battery every twenty four hours. The besieged prepared a sally; through a telescope, movement could be seen on the ramparts. At nightfall, a column was seen emerging through a postern, and gaining the lunette, protected by a covered way. My company was ordered in as reinforcements. At daybreak, five or six patriots undertook an action in the village, on the highway, above the town; then, wheeling left, they crossed the vineyards to take our battery on the flank. The Navy charged bravely, but was overcome, and exposed us. We were too badly armed to sustain fire; we marched with lowered bayonets. The attackers retreated for some reason; if they had pressed on, they would have beaten us.

We had several wounded and some dead, among others the Chevalier de La Baron nais, captain of one of the Breton companies. I brought him bad luck: the bullet that took his life ricocheted from the barrel of my musket and struck him with such force that it pierced both his temples: his brains splashed my face. Noble, pointless victim of a lost cause! When the Marshal d'Aubeterre summoned the Breton States in 17.. he stayed with Monsieur de La Baron nais, the father, who lived at Dinard, near Saint-Malo; the Marshal, who had begged him to issue no invitations, found on entering a table set with twenty-five covers, and scolded his host in a friendly manner, '*Monseigneur*,' Monsieur La Baron nais, said to him, '*it is only my children who dine with us.*' Monsieur de La Baron nais had twenty-two sons and a daughter, all by the same mother. The Revolution had mown down, before its maturity, this rich harvest of the father of a family.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 12

Continuation of the siege – Contrasts – Saints in the woods – the Battle of Bouvines – On patrol – An unexpected encounter – The effects of cannonballs and shells

London, April to September 1822.

Waldeck's Austrian corps began operations. The attacks from our side became livelier. It was a fine sight in the darkness: ground mines exploding illuminated earthworks lined with soldiers; intermittent flashes transited the clouds or the blue zenith, while cannonballs and shells, crossing in the air, described parabolas of light. In the intervals between explosions, drum-rolls were audible, bursts of military music, and the voices of guards from the ramparts of Thionville and our own positions; unfortunately they would shout in French, from both camps: '*Sentries, stand to attention!*'

If the conflict was taking place at dawn, the hymn of the lark would follow the crackle of musketry, and when the guns were no longer firing we stared silently, mouths open, through the embrasures. The bird-song, stirring memories of pastoral life, seemed to issue a reproach to mankind. It was the same when I encountered bodies among the meadows of flowering lucerne, or at the edge of a stream that bathed the hair of those dead. In the woods, a few steps from the violence of war, I found little statues of saints and the Virgin. A goatherd, a shepherd, a mendicant carrying a wallet, kneeling before these pacifiers, said their rosary to the noise of distant cannon. Once, a whole village, with its pastor, came to offer flowers to the patron saint of the neighboring parish, whose image lived in a grove of trees opposite a spring. The priest was blind; a soldier of the army of God, he had lost his sight doing good works, like a grenadier on the field of battle. The vicar led communion on behalf of his curé, since the latter could not see to place the sacred host on the lips of his communicants. During this ceremony, and in the depths of night, he blessed the light!

Our forefathers considered the patron saints of their hamlets, John the Silent, Dominic of the Cuirass, James the Mutilated, Paul the Simple, Basle the Hermit, and all the rest, no strangers to the triumph of arms by which the harvests were protected. On the very day of the Battle of Bouvines, thieves entered a monastery at Auxerre, dedicated to Saint Germain, and stole the sacred vessels. The sacristan presented himself before the reliquary of the blessed Bishop, and with a groan said to it: '*Germain, where were you, when the brigands were daring to violate your sanctuary?*' A voice rising from the reliquary replied: '*I was near Cisoing, not far from the bridge of Bouvines; with the other saints, I was aiding the French and their King to whom a brilliant victory has been granted with our help.*'

*Cui fuit auxilio Victoria praestita nostro.* [And he was the help given to us.]

We made sorties into the plain, and pushed as far as the hamlets under the further outworks of Thionville. The village on the trans-Moselle high road was endlessly taken and re-taken. I was twice involved in these attacks. The patriots considered us as enemies to liberty, aristocrats, satellites of Capet; we called them, brigands, cut-throats, traitors and revolutionaries. Sometimes a halt was called, and a duel took

place in the midst of the combatants, who became impartial witnesses; ah, that unique French character of ours which even passion cannot stifle!

One day, I was on patrol in a vineyard, and twenty paces from me was an old gentleman hunter, striking the vines with the butt of his musket, as if to flush out a hare, then glancing around him in the hope of spotting a patriot on the run; everyone displayed his own habits there.

On another day, I went to visit the Austrian camp: between this camp and that of the naval cavalry stretched the border of a wood against which the place had trouble directing its fire; the town shot at us too often, thinking us more numerous than we were, which explains the pompous bulletins issued by the commandant of Thionville. As I was traversing this wood, I saw something stirring in the undergrowth; I approached it: a man extended at full length, face to the ground, presented only his broad back to me. I thought he was wounded: I grasped him by the nape of his neck and half raised his head. He opened scared eyes, and lifted himself a little, resting on his hands; I burst out laughing: it was my cousin Moreau! I had not seen him since our visit to Madame Chastenay.

Throwing himself face down during the descent of a mortar-shell, he had been unable to rise. I had all the trouble in the world setting him on his feet; his paunch had tripled in size. He told me he was serving in the stores and that he was on the way to offer some oxen to the Prince de Waldeck. Moreover, he was carrying a rosary; Hugues Métel tells of a wolf, that around 1203 or 1204 resolved to embrace the monastic state; but unable to become accustomed to being lean, it became a canon.

Re-entering the camp, an officer of the Engineers passed near to me, leading his horse by the bridle; a cannon-ball struck the creature at the narrowest part of its neck, and severed it neatly; the head and neck were left hanging from the horseman's hand which they dragged to the earth with their weight. I have seen a shell fall in the middle of a circle of naval officers who were sitting eating, in a ring: the mess tin vanished; the officers, upset and covered with sand, shouted like a ship's captain of old: '*Fire to starboard, fire to larboard, fire all around! Fire in my wig!*'

These remarkable blows of fate seemed to belong to Thionville: in 1558, François de Guise laid siege to the place. Marshal Strozzi was killed there, while Monsieur de Guise was speaking to him with his hand on his shoulder.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 13

#### The Camp's marketplace

London, April to September 1822.

Behind our camp a kind of marketplace was established. The country people brought small casks of white Moselle wine, which remained in the wagons: the horses once un-harnessed fed at one end of a cart while people drank at the other. Small fires burnt here and there. They fried sausages in pans, boiled corn flour in basins, flipped crepes on cast-iron plates, spread pancakes over baskets. They sold aniseed cakes, rye bread for a penny, wheat cakes, green apples, brown and white eggs, pipes and tobacco, under a tree from whose branches hung thick woolen hoods, haggled over by those passing. Villagers, astride portable stools, milked their animals, each one waiting their turn to offer their vessel to the cow. In front of the stoves lurked provision-sellers in smocks and soldiers in uniform. The cooks cried their wares in German and French. Some groups stood about, others sat at pine tables planted on levelled earth. One sheltered under a canvas awning perhaps or under branches cut from the forest, as at the start of Holy Week. I think there were weddings too in the covered wagons, in the style of the Frankish kings. The patriots could easily have captured the bride's chariot, following Majorianus' example: *Rapit esseda victor, Nubentemque nurum*. [Takes With patient victor, Nubentemque the daughter in law.] (Sidonius Apollinaris.) People sang, laughed and smoked. The scene at night was extremely lively, among the fires which lit up the earth and the stars which shone above.

When I was not on guard in the batteries, or on duty in the tents, I liked to have supper at the fair. There the stories of the camp were taken up; but animated by raw spirits, and a good meal, they sounded much finer.

One of our comrades, a brevet captain, whose name for me is lost beneath that of Dinarzade with which we endowed him, was celebrated for his tales; it would have been more correct to have called him Scheherazade, but we had not considered the matter quite so thoughtfully. As soon as we saw him, we rushed up to him, quarrelling about who would sit at his table. Short in height, with long legs, lugubrious face, drooping moustaches, eyes shaped like a comma at their outer edge, a hollow voice, a large sword in a coffee-colored scabbard, the bearing of a soldier-poet, somewhere between a suicide and a jolly-good fellow, Dinazarde, the serious jester, never laughed, while one could never look at him without laughing. He was the necessary witness to all the duels, and in love with all the 'tavern' ladies. He treated everything he said as tragic, and never interrupted his story except to drink straight from the bottle, light his pipe, or swallow a sausage.

One rainy night, we made a circle round the tap of a barrel, tilted towards us on the edge of a cart, whose shafts were in the air. A candle stuck to a cask gave us light; a bit of cloth, stretched from the ends of the shafts to two posts, served us for a roof. – Dinazarde, his sword angled in the manner of Frederick II, standing between the wheel of the vehicle, and the rump of a horse, told a story to our great satisfaction. The cooks who had brought us our fare, stayed there with us to hear our *Arab*. The attentive crowd of Bacchantes and Sileni who formed the chorus, accompanied the recital with sounds of surprise, approval or disapproval.

*'Gentlemen,' said the storyteller, 'you all know about the Green Knight who lived at the time of King John?' And everyone replied: 'Yes, yes.' Dinazarde, scalding himself, swallowed a rolled-up crepe.*

*'This Green Knight, gentlemen, you must know, since you have read of him, was very handsome: when the wind blew his red hair about his helmet, it resembled a straggling mane round a green turban.'*

The assembly: *'Bravo!'*

*'One night in May, he sounded his horn before the drawbridge of a castle in Picardy, or the Auvergne, it doesn't matter which. In this castle lived the Lady of Noble Companies. She received the knight courteously, made him disarm, lead him off to bathe, and came to sit with him at a magnificent table; but she ate nothing, and the serving men were mute.'*

The assembly: *'Ah, hah!'*

*'The lady, gentlemen, was tall, flat-chested, thin; and stooped like the major's wife: though she was full of face and possessed a charming manner. When she laughed and showed her fine teeth beneath her snub nose, one no longer knew where one was. She became enamored of the knight, and the knight became enamored of the lady, though he was sore afraid.'*

Dinazarde knocked the ash from his pipe out, on the rim of the wheel, and wanted to refill his briar, but we made him continue:

*'The Green Knight, utterly exhausted, resolved to quit the castle; but before going, he asked the châtelaine for the explanation of several strange things; at the same time he made her an honest proposal of marriage, if only she was not a sorceress.'*

Dinarzade's rapier was planted stiff and straight between his legs. Sitting there, leaning forward with our pipes, we scattered around him a wreath of sparks, like a ring of Saturn. Suddenly Dinarzade cried out, as if beside himself:

*'Yes, gentlemen: the Lady of the Noble Companies was Death!'*

And the captain, breaking through the ring and crying out: *'Death! Death!'* put the cooks to flight. The session was ended: the hubbub was great and the laughter prolonged. We had approached Thionville to the noise of cannon.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 14

Night by the weapon stacks – Dutch dogs – Remembrance of the martyrs – Who my companions were in the forward positions – Eudore – Ulysses

London, April to September 1822.

The siege continued, or rather there was no siege, since there was no digging of trenches, and since the troops to formally invest the place were lacking. We counted on intelligence, and waited for news of Prussian military success, or that of Clairfayt, with whom was the French corps of the Duc de Bourbon. Our limited resources were exhausted; Paris seemed far away. The foul weather was never ending; we were drenched while we worked; I sometimes woke in a ditch with water up to my neck: next day I felt paralyzed.

Among my compatriots, I had found Ferron de la Sigonière, an old school-friend from Dinan. We slept badly in our lodging; our heads, projecting from the canvas, received the rain as if from a gutter. I would rise and, with Ferron, go and walk up and down in front of the stacks of weapons, since not all our nights were as cheerful as those with Dinarzade. We would trudge about in silence, hearing the shouts of the sentries, gazing at the lights from the paths and tents, just as we had once stared at the lamps in the school corridors. We talked about the past and the future, the errors we might have committed, the errors we might commit; we deplored the blindness of the Princes, who thought to return to their country with a handful of followers, and, by employing a stranger's arm, re-place the crown on their brother's head. I remember saying to my friend during those conversations that France would like to imitate England, that the king would die on the scaffold, and that our expedition against Thionville would probably be one of the chief grounds for accusation against Louis XVI. Ferron was struck by my prophecy: it was the first of my life. Since that time, I have made plenty of others, all of them likewise true, all of them little heeded; had the event already occurred? I headed for shelter, and there gave myself over to grappling with the tragedy I had foreseen. When the Dutch experienced a gale at sea, they retired into the depths of their ship, shut the hatches, and drank punch, leaving a dog on the bridge to bark at the storm; the danger passed, they sent Fido back to his kennel in the depths of the hold, and the captain returned to enjoy the fine weather on the poop. I have played the Dutch dog on the vessel of the Legitimacy.

The memories of my army life are engraved in my thoughts; it was them I retraced in the sixth book of *the Martyrs*.

A Breton barbarian in the camp of Princes, I carried Homer, along with my sword; I preferred my country, the tiny impoverished isle of Aaron, to the hundred cities of Crete. I said, like Telemachus: 'The acrid country that feeds goats is pleasanter to me than those where horses are raised.' My words would have drawn laughter from Menelaus of the loud war-cry, ἀγαθος Μενέλαος.



## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 15

The passage of the Moselle – Combat – Libba the deaf-mute – The attack on Thionville

London, April to September 1822.

The rumor spread that we were at last going into action; the Prince of Waldeck would attempt an assault, while we, having crossed the river, would create a diversion by a feint against the place from the French side.

Five Breton companies, mine included, the company of Picardy and Navarre officers, and the volunteer regiment, composed of young peasants from Lorraine, and deserters from several regiments, were detailed for the task. We were to be supported by the Royal-Allemand, the squadrons of musketeers, and the various corps of dragoons covering our left: my brother was in this cavalry grouping with the Baron de Montboissier, who had married a daughter of Monsieur Malesherbes, sister to Madame Rosanbo, and therefore aunt to my sister-in-law. We escorted three companies of Austrian artillery with heavy guns and a battery of three mortars.

We began at six in the evening; at ten, we crossed the Moselle above Thionville, on copper-bottomed pontoons:

*amoena fluenta*  
*Subterlabentis tacito rumore Mosellae* (Ausonius)

the lovely waters  
Of the Moselle, slipping by with quiet murmur.

At dawn, we were drawn up in battle order on the left bank, with the heavy cavalry echelons on both flanks, the light cavalry in front. Our next maneuver was to form column and commence marching.

About nine, we heard a volley of fire on our left. A carabineer officer rode up at full tilt, to tell us that a detachment of Kellermann's army was about to engage us, and that a few skirmishes had already taken place. The officer's horse had been hit in the forehead by a bullet; it reared, with foam streaming from its mouth, and blood from its nostrils: the carabineer, sitting sword in hand on his wounded horse, was superb. The corps from Metz was maneuvering to take us in the flank; they had field guns whose fire fell among the volunteer regiment. I heard the exclamations of recruits struck by the cannon balls; these last cries of lively youths snatched from life filled me with profound pity: I thought of their poor mothers.

Drums beat the charge, and we rushed in disorder at the enemy. We approached so closely that the smoke did not hinder us from seeing that terrible expression on a man's face when he is prepared to shed your blood. The patriots had not yet acquired that aplomb granted by lengthy exposure to combat and victory: their actions were inexperienced and awkward; fifty grenadiers of the Old Guard would have sliced through the heart of our heterogeneous mass of undisciplined nobles, young and old: ten to twelve

hundred infantrymen were rattled by a few shots from the Austrian heavy artillery; they retreated; our cavalry pursued them for half a dozen miles.

A deaf and dumb German girl, called Libbe or Libba, had become attached to my cousin Armand and had followed him. I found her sitting on the grass which was staining her dress with blood: her elbows were propped on her raised knees; one hand in her tangled blonde hair supported her head. She wept as she gazed at three or four of the dead, fresh deaf-mutes, lying around her. She could not hear the claps of thunder whose effects she saw, as she could not hear the sighs that escaped her lips when she looked at Armand; she had never heard the voice of the man she loved, and would not hear the first cry of the child she carried in her womb; if the grave contained only silence, she would not notice she had entered it.

Moreover, the fields of carnage are everywhere; at Père Lachaise Cemetery, in Paris, twenty-seven thousand tombs, two hundred and thirty thousand bodies, will tell you of the war Death wages day and night at your door.

After quite a long halt, we resumed our march, and arrived at nightfall under the walls of Thionville.

The drums were silent; orders were given in a low voice. In order to repel any sortie, the cavalry slipped along the roads and hedgerows to the gate we were to cannonade. The Austrian artillery, protected by our infantry, took up a position, fifty yards or so from the outworks, behind a hurriedly made breastwork of gabions. At one in the morning, on the 6th of September, a rocket launched from the Prince of Waldeck's camp, on the far side of the town, gave the signal. The Prince began a brisk fire to which the town responded vigorously. We fired simultaneously.

The besieged, not realizing we had troops on this side and not having foreseen this attack, left the southern ramparts exposed; we had no time to waste: the garrison armed a twin battery which pierced our breastworks and dismounted two of our guns. The sky was in fire; we were enveloped in torrents of smoke. I behaved like a young Alexander: worn out with fatigue, I fell sound asleep practically beneath the wheels of the gun-carriage I was guarding. A shell, bursting six inches from the ground, sent a splinter into my right thigh. Woken by the blow, but feeling no pain, I only detected my wound by the blood. I tied a handkerchief round my thigh. In the affair on the plain, two bullets had struck my haversack during a wheeling maneuver. Atala, like a devoted daughter, had placed herself between the enemy's lead and her father: she would still have to withstand the Abbé Morellet's fire.

At four in the morning, the Prince of Waldeck's fire ceased; we thought the town had surrendered; but the gates were not opened, and we had to consider retreating. We retired to our previous position, after an exhausting three day march.

The Prince of Waldeck had reached the edge of the ditches, and had attempted to cross, hoping to force surrender due to the simultaneous attacks: some divisions were thought still to be in the town, and we flattered ourselves with the hope that the Royalists there would deliver up the keys to the Princes. The Austrians, having opened fire while fully exposed, lost a considerable number of men; the Prince of Waldeck had an arm shattered. While a few drops of blood were being shed beneath the walls of Thionville, blood flowed in torrents in the Paris prisons: my wife and sisters were in greater danger than I.

## BOOK IX

### CHAPTER 16

The lifting of the siege – Entry into Verdun – The Prussian sickness (dysentery) – Retreat – Smallpox

London, April to September 1822.

We raised the siege of Thionville and left for Verdun, which had surrendered to the Allies on the 2nd of September. Longwy, the birthplace of François de Mercy had fallen on the 23rd of August. Everywhere, wreaths and festoons of flowers, attested to the passage of Frederick-William II.

I remarked, amongst the peaceful trophies, the Prussian eagle planted on Vauban's fortifications: it would not stay there for long; as for the flowers, they would soon see the innocent creatures who had gathered them fade like themselves. One of the most atrocious massacres of the Terror was that of the young girls of Verdun.

*'Forty young women of Verdun', says Riouffe, 'of unparalleled innocence, having the appearance of young virgins dressed for a public feast, were led to the scaffold together. They vanished suddenly, culled in their springtime; the Cour des femmes, the day after their death, looked like a flower-bed stripped of its flowers by some storm. I have never seen such despair among us to equal that which was stirred by this barbarity.'*

Verdun is celebrated for its female sacrifices. According to Gregory of Tours, Deuteria, wishing to hide her daughter from her husband Theodebert's attentions, placed her in a wagon hitched to two wild oxen, and precipitated her into the Meuse. The instigator of the massacre of the young girls at Verdun, was the minor regicide-poet, Pons de Verdun, relentless against his native town. That the Almanach des Muses furnished agents of the Terror seems incredible: the vanity of mediocrities in waiting produced as many revolutionaries as wounded pride did runts and amputees: appalling analogy between the infirmities of the mind and those of the body. Pons pierced his dull epigrams with a dagger-point. Apparently loyal to Greek tradition, the poet would only offer the blood of virgins to his gods: for the Convention decreed, on his advice, that no pregnant woman could be tried. He too had the sentence annulled that condemned Madame de Bonchamp to death, the widow of the celebrated general of the Vendée. Alas! We other Royalists in the Princes' following achieved the Vendéans' reverse without having passed through their glory.

To pass the time, at Verdun, we lacked the presence of *'that famous Comtesse de Saint-Balmon, who, after abandoning female dress, mounted a horse and herself served as guard to the ladies accompanying her, whom she had left in her carriage...'* We were not passionate about *Old Gaul*, and we did not send each other notes in the language of Amadis (Arnauld).

The Prussian sickness (dysentery) spread to our army; I was stricken. Our cavalry had left to meet Frederick-William at Valmy. We had no idea what was happening, and waited from hour to hour for the order to advance; we received one instead to beat a retreat.

Extremely weak, and with my irritating wound only allowing me to walk with pain, I dragged myself along as best I could at the tail of my company, which soon scattered. Jean Balue, son of a miller of Verdun, when very young left his father's house with a monk who entrusted him with his knapsack. Leaving Verdun, the town at the ford according to Saumaise (*ver dunum*), I carried the monarchy's knapsack, though I did not become a controller of finances, a bishop, or a cardinal.

If, in the novels I have written, I have utilized my own history, in the histories I have recounted I have incorporated memories of the living history in which I have taken part. So, in my *life* of the Duc de Berry, I have retraced some of the scenes which passed before my eyes:

*'When one dismisses an army, it leaves for home; but where was home for Condé's army? Where would the sticks they were permitted to cut in the woods of Germany lead them, once they laid down the muskets they had seized to defend their King? ....They were forced to disperse. Brothers in arms exchanged a last farewell, and took their separate earthly paths. Before leaving, all of them went to salute their father and captain, the aged white-haired Condé: the patriarch of glory gave his blessing to his children, wept over his dispersing tribe, and watched his camp's tents lowered with the grief of a man seeing his paternal roofs demolished.'*

Less than twenty years later, the leader of the new French army, Bonaparte, also took leave of his comrades; so many men and empires swiftly vanish! The most extraordinary fame does not prevent the most ordinary of endings!

We left Verdun. Rain had destroyed the roads; everywhere we found ammunition-wagons, gun-carriages, embedded canon, overturned carts, sutlers with their children on their back, soldiers in the mud, dead or dying. Crossing a ploughed field, I sank in up to my knees; Ferron and another of my friends pulled me out, against my wishes: I begged them to leave me there; I wanted to die.

The company captain, Monsieur de Gouyon-Miniac, handed me, on the 16th of October, in camp near Longwy, a certificate granting me leave with all honor. At Arlon, we saw a file of horse-drawn wagons on the highway; the horses, some standing, some kneeling, others with their noses resting on the ground; were all dead; and their bodies had stiffened between the shafts: they might have been the ghosts of some battle resting by the banks of the Styx. Ferron asked me what I intended to do, I replied: *'If I can reach Ostend, I will sail to Jersey and find my uncle Bedée; from there, I will be able to rejoin the Royalists in Brittany!'*

The fever was eroding my strength; I could only support myself on my wounded thigh with difficulty. I felt myself gripped by a new illness. After twenty-four hours of vomiting, my face and body were covered with an eruption; confluent smallpox had declared itself; it came and went with the variations in air temperature. In this condition, I set out, on foot, on a five hundred mile journey, rich in that I possessed eighteen *livres Tournois*; all for the greater glory of the monarchy. Ferron, who had loaned me my six crowns of three francs each, and was expected in Luxembourg, left me.

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 1

#### The Ardennes

London, April to September 1822. (Revised February 1845)

Leaving Arlon, a farmer's cart picked me up, and for the sum of four *sous* deposited me twelve miles off on a pile of stones. Having hopped a few feet with the aid of my crutch, I washed the bandages of my scratch, which had become a wound, in a spring which flowed beside the roadway, which served me very well. The smallpox fever had completely gone, and I felt relieved. I had not abandoned my knapsack though its straps cut my shoulders.

I spent the first night in a barn, with nothing to eat. The wife of the farmer who owned the barn refused payment for my bed; at daybreak she brought me a large bowl of white coffee and a cob of black bread which I found excellent. I took to the road again full of energy, though I often fell. I had been joined by four or five of my comrades who carried my rucksack; they too were quite ill. We met villagers, and riding on cart after cart, we covered enough of the road after five days to reach Attert, Flamizoul and Bellevue. On the sixth day, I found myself alone again. My smallpox swellings had whitened and subsided.

After staggering six miles, which took me six hours, I saw the camp of a gipsy family, with their two goats and a donkey, on the far side of a ditch, around a fire made from undergrowth. I had scarcely arrived before I slumped down and the singular creatures hastened to my aid. A young woman dressed in rags, lively, dark-haired, and mischievous, sang, skipped and span round and round, while holding her child slantwise to her breast, like the hurdy-gurdy which might have enlivened her dancing, then she sat on her heels, opposite me, gazing at me with curiosity in the firelight, and took my feeble hand to read my fortune, while demanding a little sou; it was too expensive. It would be difficult to possess more wisdom, kindness, or be poorer than my sibyl of the Ardennes. I am not sure when the nomads, of whom I should have made a noble son, left me: when, at daybreak, I had shaken off my dullness, I found them no longer there. My fortune-teller had gone taking with her the secret of my fate. In exchange for my petit sou, she had placed an apple beside me that served to refresh my mouth. I was shivering like *Jeannot Lapin* in the *thyme* and the *dew*; but I could neither nibble nor scamper, nor run madly in circles. I rose nevertheless with the intention of paying *court to the dawn*: she was very beautiful, and I was very ugly; her rosy cheeks proclaimed her good health; she was in better shape than her poor Armorican *Cephalus*. Though we were both young, we were old friends, and I imagined her tears that morning were for me.

I plunged into the forest: I was not overly saddened; solitude had brought me back to my true nature. I chanted a ballad by the unfortunate *Cazotte*:

*'Deep in the midst of the Ardennes,  
A castle stands on a rocky height' etc. etc.*

Was it not in the keep of this castle full of phantoms, that the King of Spain, Philip II, imprisoned my compatriot, the captain, La Noue, who had a Chateaubriand for a grandmother? Philip consented to the release of his illustrious prisoner, if he would consent to being blinded; La Noue was on the point of accepting this offer, such was his hunger to regain his beloved Brittany. Alas! I was possessed with the same desire, and to lose my sight it would only require the effects of the illness, with which it had pleased God to afflict me, I did not meet with *Sir Enguerrand* on his way from Spain, but with poor wretches, market stallholders, who, like me, carried their whole fortune on their backs. A woodcutter, with felt knee-pads, entered the wood: he might have taken me for a dead branch and lopped me. Crows, skylarks, and buntings, a species of large finch, hopped in the roadway, or perched motionless on the line of stones, alert to the hawk that glided in circles in the heavens. From time to time, I heard the sound of the swineherd's horn as he guarded his sows and their young, feeding on acorns. I rested in a shepherd's hut on wheels; I found no one at home other than a kitten which gave me a thousand graceful caresses. The shepherd was standing far off, in the middle of a track, his dogs stationed round the sheep at various distances; during the day, this shepherd gathered simples, he was a herbalist and a sorcerer; at night he gazed at the stars, he was a Chaldean shepherd.

I was stationed a mile or more higher, in deer-pasture: hunters traversed its boundary. A fountain welled up at my feet; in the depths of this fountain, in this same forest, *Orlando*, *innamorato*, not *furioso*, saw a palace of crystal full of knights and ladies. If the paladin, who met with the shining naiads, had at least left Golden-Bridle beside the spring; if Shakespeare had sent me *Rosalind* and the exiled *Duke*, it would have been a great help to me.

Having regained my breath, I continued my journey. My weakened thoughts drifted on a sea which was not without charm; my old phantoms, scarcely possessing the consistency of shadows, three-quarters effaced, surrounded me to wish me farewell. I no longer had the power of memory; I saw in the indefinite distance, mingled with unknown images, the airy forms of my relatives and friends. When I sat down against a milestone, I thought I could see faces smiling at me from the thresholds of far-off huts, in the blue smoke escaping from the roofs of thatched cottages, in the tops of the trees, in the transparent clouds, in the luminous sheaves of the sun drawing its rays over the heather like a golden rake. The apparitions were those of the *Muses* arriving to assist at the death of a poet: my grave, dug with the lintel of their lyres beneath an oak-tree in the Ardennes, would be as fitting for the soldier as the traveller. Only the hazel grouse, wandering where the hares shelter beneath the privet, and the insects, made a murmur around me; lives as slight, as unknown as mine. I could walk no further; I felt I was in extremities; the small-pox had returned and was suffocating me.

Towards the end of that day, I was lying on my back on the ground, in a ditch, my head supported by the knapsack containing *Atala*, my crutch beside me, my eyes fixed on the sun, whose gaze was fading with mine. I saluted with utter mildness of thought the star which had lighted my early youth in my native land: we were setting together, he to rise more gloriously, I, in all likelihood, never to wake again. I lapsed into unconsciousness with a religious feeling: the last sound I heard was the fall of a leaf and the whistling of a bullfinch.

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 2

The Prince de Ligne's wagons – The women of Namure – I find my brother again in Brussels –  
Our last farewell

London, April to September 1822. (Revised February 1845)

It seems that I was unconscious for two hours more or less. The Prince de Ligne's wagons happened to pass by; one of the drivers had stopped to cut a branch of silver birch, and without noticing me, stumbled over me: he thought me dead and grasped me by the leg; I gave a sign of life. The driver called to his friends, and, with merciful instinct, threw me into a cart. The jolting revived me: I was able to speak to my saviors; I told them I was a soldier in the Army of Princes, and that if they would take me to Brussels, where I was going, I would repay them for their effort. '*Well, friend,*' one of them replied, '*you will have to get off at Namur, since we are forbidden to carry anyone for hire. We will pick you up again on the other side of the town.*' I asked for a drink; I swallowed several gulps of brandy which brought the symptoms of my illness to the surface and relieved my chest for a while: nature had endowed me with extraordinary powers of resistance.

About ten in the morning we arrived in the suburbs of Namur. I set foot on the ground and followed the carts from a distance; I soon lost sight of them. On entering the town I was stopped. While they were examining my papers I sat in the doorway. The soldiers on guard there, on seeing my uniform, offered me a crust of army bread, and the corporal presented me with pear brandy in a blue glass pot. I made several attempts to drink from the cup of military hospitality: 'Come on, drink it!' he cried angrily, accompanying his injunction with a *Sacrement der Teufel!*

My traverse of Namur was painful: I went by, leaning against the buildings. The first woman who saw me came out of her shop, and gave me her arm with a look of compassion, and helped me drag myself along; I thanked her and she replied: '*No, no, soldier.*' Soon other women ran up to me, bringing bread, wine, fruit, milk, broth, old clothes, and blankets. '*He is wounded,*' some said in their Brabant-French patois; '*He has smallpox,*' cried others, and pushed their children away. '*But, young man, you can't walk; you will die; stop at the hospital.*' They wanted to take me there, and relayed me from door to door, conducting me in this way to the one hospital the town possessed, outside which I found the wagons. You have seen a farmer's wife succor me, you will see another woman, in Guernsey, take me in. Women who have helped me in my distress, if you are still alive, may God aid you in old age and sadness! If you have left this life, may your children own a share of that happiness that heaven refused me for so long!

The women of Namur helped me climb into the wagon, recommended me to the driver, and forced me to accept a woolen blanket. I noticed that they treated me with a kind of respect, or deference: there is something elevated and thoughtful in the French character that other nations recognize. The Prince de Ligne's people set me down in the road where it entered Brussels and refused my last *écu*.

In Brussels, not one hotel would accept me. *The Wandering Jew*, the *Orestes* of the populace, whom the old ballad of lament placed in that town:

*'When he was in that town  
Of Brussels in Brabant,'*

was more welcome there than I was, since he had five *sous* in his pocket. I knocked, someone opened; seeing me they shouted: '*Pass on! Pass on!*' and shut the door in my face. They drove me from the cafes. My hair hung over my face, masked by my beard and moustache; my thigh was encased in a plaster, made of clay and straw; over my ragged uniform, I wore the woolen blanket from Namur, tied round my neck like a cloak. The beggar in the *Odyssey* was more insolent, but not as poor as me.

At first I presented myself in vain at the hotel where I had stayed with my brother; I made a second attempt: as I was approaching the entrance, I saw the Comte de Chateaubriand descend from a carriage with the Baron de Montboissier. He was frightened by my spectre. They looked for a room for me outside the hotel, since the owner refused utterly to admit me. A wigmaker offered a hovel suited to my wretchedness. My brother brought a doctor and a surgeon to me. He had received letters from Paris; Monsieur de Malesherbes invited him to return to France. He told me of the Tenth of August, the September Massacres, and the latest political situation of which I knew nothing. He approved of my plan to cross to Jersey, and advanced me twenty-five *louis*. My weakened eyesight barely enabled me to make out my unfortunate brother's features; I thought that those shadows emanated from me, when they were in reality the shadows that Eternity was casting around him: without knowing it, we were seeing each other for the last time. All of us, while we live, have only the present moment; what follows is a matter for God: there are two possibilities of never again meeting the friend we are leaving: our death or his. How many men never remount the staircase they have just descended?

Death touches us more before than after the passing of a friend: it is a part of ourselves that is detaching itself, a world of childhood memories, family intimacies, common affections and interest which dissolves. My brother preceded me from my mother's loins; he was first to inhabit that same sacred womb from which I emerged after him; he sat before me at the paternal hearth; he waited several years to welcome me, gave me my baptismal name, and was part of my whole youth. My blood, mixed with his blood in the revolutionary tub, would have had the same flavor, like milk produced from the pastures of a single mountain. But if men have caused my elder brother's head, my godfather's, to fall before its time, the years have not spared mine: already my forehead is bald; I feel, these days, as if an Ugolino leant over me, who gnaws at my skull:

*...come'l pan per fame si manduca* (as bread is chewed, out of hunger)



## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 3

Ostend – The crossing to Jersey – I am landed on Guernsey – The pilot's wife – Jersey – My uncle De Bedée and his family – A description of the island – The Duc de Berry – Friends and relatives lost – The misfortune of growing old – I cross to England – My last meeting with Gesril

London, April to September 1822.

The doctor could not get over his astonishment: he considered this fluctuating smallpox that failed to kill me, and did not develop to a natural crisis, as a phenomenon for which medicine offered no precedent. As for my wound, gangrene had set in: the wound was dressed with cinchona. Having obtained this first aid, I insisted in leaving for Ostend. Brussels was odious to me; I was keen to get away; it was filling once more with those heroes of domesticity, returning from Verdun in their carriages, whom I did not see, in that same Brussels, when I accompanied the King during the Hundred Days.

I reached Ostend slowly via the canals: there I found several Bretons, my companions in arms. We chartered a decked boat and sailed down the Channel. We slept in the hold, on the shingle that served as ballast. My physical strength was exhausted. I could no longer speak; the swell of a rough sea brought me to the point of collapse. I could barely swallow a few drops of lemon water, and when bad weather forced us to put into Guernsey, they thought I was about to expire; an emigrant priest read me the prayers for the dying. The captain, not wishing me to do so, on board, ordered them to set me down on the quay: they sat me in the sun, back against a wall, head turned towards the open sea, facing the island of Alderney, where eight months or so previously I had faced death in another form.

Apparently I was fated to arouse pity. The wife of an English pilot happened to be passing; she was moved, and called her husband who, aided by two or three sailors, carried me, a friend of the waves, into a fisherman's cottage; they laid me on a comfortable bed, between the whitest sheets. The young woman took every possible care of the stranger: I owe her my life. The next day I was taken back on board. My hostess almost wept on parting from her patient; women have a heaven-sent instinct regarding misfortune. My lovely, fair-haired guardian, who resembled a figure from some old English print, pressed my swollen, burning hands between her long, cool ones: I was ashamed to bring such ugliness close to such beauty.

We set sail, and reached the westernmost point of Jersey. Monsieur de Tilleul, one of my companions, went to St Helier, to my uncle. Next day, Monsieur de Bedée came in a carriage to fetch me. We crossed the whole island: though I felt quite deathly, I was still charmed by its hedged fields: but babbled nothing but nonsense about them, having fallen into a delirium.

I lay for four months between life and death. My uncle, his wife, his son, and three daughters, took turns beside my bed. I occupied an apartment in one of the houses they had begun to build along the foreshore: my bedroom windows reached the floor, and beyond the end of my bed I could see the sea. The doctor, Monsieur Delattre, had forbidden any talk of serious matters, especially politics, with me. Towards the end of January 1793, seeing my uncle enter my room in full mourning, I trembled, thinking we had lost a

member of the family: he informed me of the death of Louis XVI. I was not surprised; I had foreseen it. I asked for news of my relatives; my sisters and my wife had returned to Brittany briefly after the September Massacres; they had found considerable difficulty in leaving Paris. My brother, on his return to France, was living quietly with Monsieur Malesherbes.

I began to leave my bed; the smallpox had vanished; but I felt pain in my chest, and a weakness remained which stayed with me for a long time.

Jersey, the *Caesarea* of the Antonine Itinerary, was subject to the English crown from the death of Robert, Duke of Normandy; we have attempted to recapture it on several occasions, but always without success. The island is a relic of our ancient history. Saints, who came from Hibernia and Albion to Brittany-Armorica, broke their journey at Jersey.

St Helier, solitary, is sited among the rocks of Caesarea; the Vandals committed massacres there. On Jersey one finds a sample of ancient Normans; one might think one was hearing William the Bastard speaking, or the author of the Roman du Rou.

The island is fertile; it has two towns and twelve parishes; it is covered with country houses and herds. The ocean breeze, which seems to forego its harshness, allows Jersey to produce exquisite honey, extremely soft cream, and butter of a rich yellow color that smells of violets. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre presumes that apple-trees came to us from Jersey; he is wrong: we obtained the apple and pear from Greece, as we owe the peach to Persia, the lemon to the Medes, the plum to Syria, the cherry to Cerasonte (Turkey), the chestnut to Castania (Pontus or Thessaly), the quince to Cydon (Crete), and the pomegranate to Cyprus.

I took great pleasure in going about during the first few days of May. Spring retains all its freshness on Jersey; one might still call it primavera as long ago, a name which while growing old, has left behind a daughter, the primrose, the first flower with which it garlands itself.

Here I will transcribe two pages for you from my *life* of the Duc de Berry, which is no less to tell you of mine:

*'After twenty-two years of struggle, the barrier of bronze which enclosed France had been forced: the hour of the Restoration neared; our Princes left their retreats. Each of them made for different points on the various frontiers, like travellers who seek, on peril of their life, to penetrate a country of which wonders are told. Monsieur headed for the Swiss, Monseigneur le Duc d'Angouleme for the Spanish, and his brother for Jersey. In that island, where several of Charles I's judges died, ignored by the world, Monseigneur le Duc de Berry met French royalists, aged by exile, their virtues forgotten, as formerly had been the English regicides' crime. He met old priests, now consecrated to solitude; he recognized in them the character invented by the poet who wrote of a Bourbon setting foot on Jersey, after a storm. Just such a confessor and martyr might have said to the heir of Henry IV, as the hermit of Jersey said to that great King:*

*'Far then from the Court, in this obscure place,  
I come to bewail the injury to my faith.'* (Henriade)

*Monseigneur le Duc de Berry spent several months in Jersey; the sea, the wind, and politics kept him there. All of them ran counter to his impatient wishes; he found himself on the point of renouncing his enterprise, and embarking for Bordeaux. A letter from him to Madame la Maréchale Moreau, vividly displays his pre-occupation, on his rocky isle:*

*8th of February 1814.*

*'Here I am then, like Tantalus, in sight of that unhappy France which has so much trouble breaking free of its chains. You whose soul is so fine, so French, reflect on all that I experience; on what it costs me to be far from those shores that it would only take me two hours to reach! When the sun illuminates them, I climb the highest cliff, and, telescope in hand, I possess the whole coastline; I see the cliffs of Coutances. My imagination is exalted, I see myself leaping to earth, surrounded by the French, with white cockades in their hats: I hear the cry of: 'Long live the King!' that cry which the French can never hear unmoved; the most beautiful lady of the province drapes a white scarf around me, since love and glory are always found together. We march on Cherbourg; some villainous army, with a garrison of foreigners, tries to defend it: we carry it by assault, and a vessel leaves to go and bring the King, under the white banner which recalls days of glory and happiness for France! Ah! Madame, when one is only a few hours away from a dream so achievable, how can one think of going further away?'*

It is three years since I wrote these pages in Paris; My presence in Jersey, that island of exile, had preceded Monsieur le Duc de Berry's by twenty-two years; I was obliged to leave my name there, since Armand de Chateaubriand married there and his son Frédéric was born there.

Gaiety had not abandoned my uncle Bedée's family; my aunt kept a large and cherished dog descended from those whose virtues I have recounted; as he bit everyone and was mangy, my cousins secretly had him put down, despite his nobility. Madame de Bedée was persuaded that the English officers, charmed by the beauty of Azor, had stolen him, and that he lived full of honors and dinners, in the richest castle of the three kingdoms. Alas! Our present hilarity was only composed of our past gaiety. In retracing scenes from Monchoix, we found the means to generate laughter in Jersey. That is rare enough, for in the human heart, pleasures do not maintain the same relationship between themselves that sorrows preserve there: new joys do not recreate former joys, but recent sorrows revive old sorrows.

One more thing, the émigrés excited general sympathy at that time; our cause seemed the cause of the European orders: honorable adversity is something, and ours was such.

Monsieur de Bouillon was the protector of the French refugees in Jersey: he dissuaded me from my plan to cross to Brittany, unfit as I was to endure an existence in caves and forests; he advised me to head for England and look for an opportunity there of entering the regular service. My uncle, ill provided with money, began to feel uneasy given his large family; he found himself obliged to send his son to London to feed himself on poverty and hope. Fearing to be a burden on Monsieur de Bedée, I decided to relieve him of my person.

Thirty louis brought to me by a Saint-Malo smuggler, enabled me to execute my plan and I booked a berth on the Southampton packet. On saying farewell to my uncle, I was deeply moved; he had cared for

me with a father's affection; the few happy moments of my childhood were associated with him; he knew all that was dear to me; I saw a certain resemblance to my mother in his features. I had left that excellent mother behind, and I would not see her again; I had left my sister Julie and my brother, and was doomed to meet them no more; I was leaving my uncle, and his beaming countenance would never again gladden my eyes. A few months had sufficed to bring about all these losses, for the death of our friends is not to be reckoned from the moment when they die, but from that when we cease to live with them.

If one could say to Time: '*All is fair!*' one could arrest it at the moment of delight; but since one cannot, let us not linger down here; let us depart, before we have seen our friends vanish, and those years which the poet found alone worthy of life: *Vita dignior aetas* [Worthier of life]. What enchants us at the age for liaisons becomes a matter of pain and regret at the age of detachment. One no longer wishes for the return of the smiling seasons; rather one fears it: the birds, the flowers, a lovely evening at the end of April, a lovely night beginning at dusk with the first nightingale, completed at dawn by the first swallow, those things which stir the need and desire for happiness, you extinguish. Other charms, you still feel them, but they are not for you: youth which tastes them at your side and which you gaze at disdainfully, renders you jealous and makes you understand the depth of your loss. The freshness and grace of Nature, in reminding you of past joys, increases the ugliness of your woes. You are no more than a blemish on Nature: you spoil the harmony and sweetness by your presence, by your words, and even by the sentiments which you dare to express. You could love, but you can no longer be an object of love. The fountain of spring has renewed its waters without giving you back your youth, and the sight of everything that is reborn, everything joyful, limits you to the painful memory of your pleasures.

The packet I embarked on was crowded with émigré families. There I made the acquaintance of Monsieur Hingant, a former colleague of my brother's at the High Court of Brittany, a man of taste and intelligence of whom I shall have much to say. A naval officer was playing chess in the captain's cabin; he did not recognize my face, I was so changed; but I remembered Gesril. We had not seen each other since Brest; we were destined to part at Southampton. I told him about my travels, he told me of his. This young man, born near me among the waves, embraced his first friend for the last time in the midst of those waves which would soon bear witness to his glorious death. Lamba Doria, the Genoese Admiral, having overcome the Venetian fleet, learnt that his son had been killed: *Give him to the sea*, said the father, in the manner of the ancient Romans, as if he had said: '*Give him to glory.*' Gesril only left the waves into which he threw himself, voluntarily, in order to better reveal to them his *glory* on their shore.

I have already given, at the beginning of the sixth book of these *Memoirs*, the certificate of my disembarkation from Jersey at Southampton. Here then, after my journeys through the woods of America, and the army camps of Germany, I came in 1793, as a poor émigré, to the country in which, in 1822, I write all this, and to which I am now the glorious ambassador.

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 4

The Literary Fund – An attic in Holborn – The worsening of my health – A visit to the doctors – Émigrés in London

London, April to September 1822.

A society exists in London to provide assistance to men of letters, English as well as foreign. This society recently invited me to its annual meeting; it was my duty to attend and pay my subscription. His Royal Highness the Duke of York occupied the president's chair; on his right was the Duke of Somerset, and Lords Torrington and Bolton; he placed me on his left. There I met my friend Mr. Canning. The poet, orator, and illustrious minister made a speech in which appeared this passage making honorable mention of me, which the newspapers repeated: *'Though the person of my noble friend, the French Ambassador, may be little known here as yet, his character and writings are well known throughout the whole of Europe. He began his career by revealing the principles of Christianity; he has continued it by defending that of the Monarchy, and now he has arrived in this country to unite our two States through the common ties of monarchist principle and Christian virtue.'*

It is many years since Mr. Canning, man of letters, learnt his politics in London under Mr. Pitt; almost the same number of years since I began writing, in obscurity, in this same English capital. Both of us, reaching high station, are members now of a society dedicated to helping unfortunate writers. Is it the affinity of grandeur, or the compatibility of suffering, that has united us? What are a Governor-General of India and a French Ambassador doing at a banquet of the distressed Muses? It was George Canning and François de Chateaubriand who sat there, in remembrance of their past adversity and perhaps felicity; they have drunk to the memory of Homer, reciting his verse for a morsel of bread.

If the Literary Fund had been available to me when I arrived in London from Southampton, on the 21st of May 1793, it might perhaps have paid for the doctor's visits to my attic in Holborn, where my cousin La Bouëtardais, son of my uncle Bedée, accommodated me. Wonders were expected from the change of air in restoring to me the necessary strength for a soldier's life; but my health, instead of recovering, declined. My chest was the first problem; I was thin and pale, coughed frequently, and breathed painfully; I experienced sweating and spat blood. My friends, as poor as me, dragged me from doctor to doctor. These followers of Hippocrates made the crowd of beggars wait outside the door then declared, at the price of a guinea, that it was necessary for me to endure my illness patiently, adding: *'Tis done, dear Sir.'* Doctor Goodwyn, celebrated for his experiments related to drowning and performed on his own person according to his instructions, was more generous: he assisted me with free advice; but told me, with the harshness he applied to himself, that I might last a few months, perhaps a year or two, so long as I gave up everything that tired me. *'Don't count on a long career'*: such was the summary of his consultations.

The certainty I so gained of my imminent end, by increasing the natural mournfulness of my imagination, induced in me an incredible mental calm. That inner disposition explains a passage in the foreword at the head of my Essai Historique, and this other passage of the same *Essai*: *'Attacked by an illness which*

*leaves me with little hope, I regard all objects with a tranquil eye; the calm air of the tomb makes itself apparent to the traveller who is only a few days journey from it.*' The bitterness of the reflections expanded on in the *Essai* will not then astonish anyone: it was after suffering the mortal blow of a death sentence, between the judgement and the execution, that I composed that work. A writer who thinks he has reached his end, in poverty and exile, can hardly display a smiling face to the world.

But how to pass the period of grace allotted me? I could either live or die swiftly on my sword: physical effort was forbidden me; what was left? My pen? It was unknown and unproven and I did not know its power. Could my innate taste for literature, my childhood attempts at poetry, my travel sketches, suffice to attract the attention of the public? The idea of writing a work comparing the various Revolutions came to me; it occupied my mind as a subject appropriate to the concerns of the day; but who would undertake to print a manuscript without patrons, and during the composition of the manuscript, who would support me? Though I had only a few months left on earth, nevertheless it was necessary to have some means of living out those few months. My thirty *louis*, already much reduced, would not last long enough, and in addition to my specific needs, I ought to be alleviating the general distress of the *émigrés*. My companions in London all had occupations: some were in the coal trade; some made straw hats with their wives, others taught French they barely knew themselves. They were all very cheerful. The fault of our nation, its flippancy, at that time became a virtue. They laughed in the face of fortune; that thief sheepishly carried off what no one any longer demanded of her.

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 5

Peltier – Literary effort – My friendship with Hingant – Our walks – A night in Westminster Cathedral

London, April to September 1822.

Peltier, author of *Domine salvum fac Regem* (God Save the King) and editor-in-chief of the *Actes des Apôtres*, continued his Parisian enterprises in London. He was not exactly prone to vice; but he was eaten by vermin, small faults of which he could not be purged: a libertine, a rebellious subject, making plenty of money and consuming the same, at once servant of the legitimacy and ambassador to George III for the Negro King Christophe, diplomatic correspond for Monsieur le Comte de Limonade, drinking as champagne the appointments for which he was paid in sugar. A kind of Monsieur Violet playing the fine tunes of the Revolution on a pocket violin, he came to see me, and offered me his services, as a Breton. I spoke to him of my idea for the *Essai*; he strongly approved: ‘*That would be superb!*’ he cried, and suggested a room at the house of his printer Baylis, who would print the work as it was created. Deboffe’s bookshop would handle the sale of it; he, Peltier, would trumpet it in his journal, while it could be inserted in the *Courrier Français de Londres*, whose editorship later passed to Monsieur de Montlosier. Peltier had no misgivings: he talked of getting me the *Cross of Saint-Louis* for my efforts at the siege of Thionville. My Gil Blas, tall, thin, difficult, with powdered hair and balding forehead, forever shouting and laughing, tipped his round hat over one ear, took me by the arm and led me to the printer, Baylis, where without any fuss he rented me a room, at the price of a guinea a month.

I was on the brink of a golden future; but as for the present, over what plank could I cross it? Peltier found work for me translating from Latin and English: during the day I labored at these translations, at night on the *Essai Historique* in sections of which I included my travels and my daydreams. Baylis provided me with books, and I employed a few shillings badly in buying others from the bookstalls.

Hingant whom I had met on the Jersey packet, became a close friend. He cultivated literary matters, was knowledgeable, and wrote novels secretly the pages of which he read to me. He lodged not far from Baylis, at the end of a street leading into Holborn. Every morning, at ten, I breakfasted with him; we talked about politics and above all about my work. I would tell him how much of my nocturnal edifice, the *Essai*, I had constructed; then I would return to my day’s work, translation. We met for dinner, at a shilling a head, in a public house; from there, we made for the fields. Often too we would go for walks alone, since the two of us were fond of musing.

I would make my way, in those days, towards Kensington or Westminster. Kensington pleased me; I would walk in the secluded part, while the part adjacent to Hyde Park was filled by a brilliant multitude. The contrast between my poverty and their wealth, my isolation and the crowd, suited me. With that confused longing with which my *sylph* used to afflict me, when having decked her out in all my follies I scarcely dared to raise my eyes to my handiwork, I would watch young Englishmen going by in the distance. Death, which I thought myself to be approaching, added mystery to this vision of a world which I had almost left. Did anyone cast an eye on the foreigner sitting at the foot of a pine-tree? Did some lovely woman divine the unknown presence of René?

At Westminster I had another pastime: in that labyrinth of tombs, I thought of my own, ready to open. The bust of an insignificant man like me would never have a place amongst these illustrious effigies. Then the royal sepulchres would loom: Charles I was not there and Cromwell was no longer there. The ashes of a traitor, Robert d'Artois, lay beneath the flagstones that I trod with loyal steps. The fate of Charles I had just been extended to Louis XVI; every day the steel reaped its harvest, in France, and the graves of my relatives had already been dug.

The singing of the choir and the conversation of visitors interrupted my reflections. I could not visit frequently, since it obliged me to give the wardens of those no longer living the shilling which I needed in order to stay alive. But instead I would circle the Abbey with the rooks, or stop to gaze at the towers, twins that appeared of unequal size, which the setting sun lit with its blood-red fires against the black backcloth of City smoke.

One day, however, it so happened that wishing to contemplate the interior of the basilica, I was lost, at evening, in admiration of that bold, capricious architecture. Overcome by the feeling of the *sombre immensity of Christian churches* (Montaigne), I wandered about with slow steps, and was benighted: the doors were closed. I tried to find an exit; I called for the usher, and rattled the gates: all this noise, spreading and fading in the silence, was lost; I had to resign myself to sleeping among the dead.

After hesitating in my choice of bed, I stopped by the mausoleum of Lord Chatham, at the foot of the rood screen, and the double flight of steps to the Chapel of the Knights and of Henry VII. At the entrance to these stairs, these aisles closed by grills, a tomb built into the wall, facing a marble statue of Death armed with a spear, offered me shelter. The folds of a shroud, equally of marble, provided a niche: following Charles-Quint's example, I accustomed myself to my interment. I was lodged perfectly for seeing the world as it truly is. What heaps of grandeur are enclosed by those vaults! What remains of us? Our sorrows are no less vain than our joys; the unfortunate Jane Grey is no different from the happy Alys of Salisbury; only her skeleton is less dreadful, since it lacks a head; her carcass improved by her fate and the absence of that which gave her beauty. The tournaments of the victor of Crécy, the entertainments of Henry VIII's Field of the Cloth of Gold, will not continue in this chamber of funereal sights. Bacon, Newton, Milton are as deeply buried, as eternally past, as their more obscure contemporaries. I, a poor, wandering, exile, would I consent to be no longer the little, sad neglected thing I was, in order to have been one of these famous dead, powerful and sated with pleasure? Oh, life is not about all that! If from the shores of this world we fail to see divine things clearly, let us not be surprised: time is a veil interposed between God and ourselves, as our eyelid is between our eye and the light.

Concealed beneath my marble cloak, I lapsed from these lofty thoughts into my naïve impressions of place and time. My anxiety mixed with pleasure, was similar to that which I experienced in winter in my tower at Combourg, when I listened to the wind: a sigh and a shade are of like nature.

Gradually, I accustomed myself to the darkness, and made out the statues placed on the tombs. I gazed at the corbelled vaulting of the English Saint-Denis, from which one would have said past events and vanished years hung in a Gothic light: the whole edifice was like a monolithic temple of petrified centuries.



I counted ten hours, eleven by the clock; the hammer which rose and fell, on the bronze, was the only 'living' thing beside me in the place. Outside, a vehicle passing by, the cry of a watchman, that was all: those distant sounds of earth reached me in a world within a world. The Thames fog, and the smoke from the chimneys, infiltrated the basilica, and spread secondary shadows.

At last, a pre-dawn glow blossomed in a corner of dullest gloom: I gazed fixedly at the progressive growth of the light; did it emanate from the two sons of Edward IV, murdered by their uncle? '*O, thus lay the gentle babes*', says the great tragedian, '*...girdling one another within their alabaster innocent arms. Their lips were four red roses on a stalk, and in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.*' God did not send me those sad and tender souls; but the slender phantom of a barely adolescent girl carrying a light sheltered by a leaf of paper twisted like a shell: it was the little bell-ringer. I heard the sound of a kiss, and the bell rang for daybreak. The bell-ringer was utterly terrified when I exited with her through the cloister door. I told her my tale; she explained that she was there to carry out her father's task because he was ill; we did not speak of the kiss.

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 6

Distress – Unforeseen help – A lodging over a cemetery – New friends in misfortune – Our pleasures –  
My cousin La Bouëtardais

London, April to September 1822.

I amused Hingant with the tale of my adventure, and we decided to make a retreat at Westminster; but our poverty summoned us among the dead in a less poetic way.

My funds were running out: Baylis and Deboffe, in return for a written promise of reimbursement in case of poor sales, ventured to begin printing the *Essai*; it was the end of their generosity, and that was only natural; I was more surprised at their daring. No more translation work arrived: Peltier, being a man dedicated to pleasure, grew weary of his prolonged kindness to me. He would willingly have given me what he had, if he had not preferred spending it; but hunting for work here and there, and doing a good deed patiently, were impossibilities, to him. Hingant too saw his resources diminishing; between the two of us, we possessed only sixty francs. We cut down on our rations, as if on a prolonged voyage aboard ship. Instead of a shilling a head, we only spent sixpence on dinner. With our morning tea, we halved the amount of bread, and gave up butter. This abstinence frayed my friend's nerves. It crazed him; he would prick up his ears as if he were listening for someone; then, as if in response, start laughing, or burst into tears. Hingant believed in *magnetism*, and confused his brain with *Swedenborg's gibberish*. In the morning he would tell me of being disturbed by noises during the night; he grew angry if I ridiculed his imaginings. The anxiety he caused me prevented me from feeling my own sufferings.

They were significant, nevertheless: the rigorous diet, and my work, inflamed my diseased chest; I began to find difficulty in walking, yet I spent my days and part of my nights out of doors, so no one would be aware of my poverty. Down to our last shilling, my friend and I agreed to employ it to provide a semblance of breakfasting. We decided to buy a penny roll; and would allow the hot water and teapot to be brought as usual; we would not put the tea in, we would eat no bread, but we would drink the hot water, with a few of the small grains of sugar left at the bottom of the sugar-bowl.

Five days passed like this. Hunger consumed me; I was feverish; sleep deserted me; I sucked pieces of linen soaked in water; I chewed grass and paper. When I passed the bakers' shops, the torment was terrible. One bitter wintry night, I stood for two hours outside a shop which sold dried fruit and smoked meat, devouring everything I saw with my eyes: I could have eaten not merely the food, but the boxes, baskets and trays.

On the morning of the fifth day, fainting from inanition, I dragged myself to Hingant's room; I knocked at the door, it was locked; I called out, Hingant did not reply for a while; at last he got up and opened the door. He was laughing in an odd manner; his frock coat was buttoned up: he sat down at the tea table: '*Our breakfast is on its way*,' he said, in a strange voice. I thought I could see spots of blood on his shirt; I unbuttoned his coat swiftly: he had given himself a stab-wound, two inches deep, low on his left breast. I shouted for help. The maidservant ran for a surgeon. The wound was dangerous.

This new misfortune forced me to take action. Hingant, a counsellor at the High Court of Brittany, had refused to accept the payment that the British Government granted to French magistrates, just as I had declined the alms of a shilling a day for *émigrés*: I wrote to Monsieur de Barentin and explained my friend's situation to him. Hingant's relatives rushed to his side and took him off to the country. At that very moment, my uncle Bedée sent me forty crowns, a touching gift from my persecuted family; it seemed like all the gold of Peru to me: the gift of those prisoners of France supported the exiled Frenchman.

My poverty had become an obstacle to working. Since I no longer provided copy, printing had been suspended. Deprived of Hingant's company, I relinquished my guinea-a-month lodging with Baylis; I paid the outstanding rent and left. Lower still than the needy *émigrés* who had proved my first patrons in London, were others, needier still. There are levels among the poor as among the rich; one can descend from the man who huddles with his dog against the winter cold, to the man who shivers in tattered rags. My friends found me a room better suited to my diminishing fortune (one is not always at the height of prosperity); they installed me near Marylebone Street, in a garret, its window overlooking a cemetery: each night the watchman's rattle alerted me to the presence of body-snatchers. I had the consolation of knowing that Hingant was out of danger.

Friends visited my attic. Given our freedom and our poverty, we might have been taken for painters among the ruins of Rome: we were artists in destitution among the ruins of France. My figure served as a model and my bed as a seat for my pupils. This bed consisted of a mattress and a blanket. I had no sheets; in cold weather, a chair, my clothes, and the blanket, rendered me warm. Too weak to move my bed, it remained where God had placed it.

My cousin La Bouëtardais, hounded from an Irish hovel for failing to pay his rent, though he had left his violin as a pledge, came to me seeking shelter from the bailiff; a curate from southern Brittany loaned him a camp-bed. La Bouëtardais was, like Hingant, a counsellor at the High Court of Brittany; he had not a handkerchief to call his own; but he had deserted with bag and baggage, that is to say he had carried off his mitre-board and his red robe, and he slept beneath the purple by my side. When we could not sleep, being high-spirited and a good musician, with a fine voice, he would sit quite naked on his camp-bed, wearing his mitre-board, and singing ballads, accompanying himself on a guitar with only three strings. One night as the poor lad was humming the *Hymn to Venus* by Metastasio: *Scendi propizia* [Descend propitious], he had a stroke, and his mouth became twisted: he eventually died of one, years later: thinking it the effect of a cold draught, I merely rubbed his cheeks, energetically. We would take council in our high chamber, we would discuss politics; we would fill our time with *émigré* gossip. In the evenings, we would go and dance at our aunts' and cousins' houses, fashionably beribboned, with our hats done up.

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 7

A sumptuous reception – The end of my forty crowns – Fresh misery - Table d'hôte – Bishops – Dining at the London Tavern – Camden's manuscripts

London, April to September 1822.

Those reading this part of my *Memoirs* are not aware that I have twice interrupted my writing of them: once, to offer a banquet for the Duke of York, brother of the King of England; and again, to give a reception marking the anniversary of the King of France's return to Paris, on the 8th of July. This reception cost me forty thousand francs. Peers and Peeresses of the British Empire, ambassadors, and distinguished foreigners filled my splendidly decorated rooms. My tables shone with the glitter of London crystal, and the gold of Sèvres porcelain. There was an abundance of the finest dishes, wines and flowers. Portland Place was dense with gleaming carriages. Collinet, and Almack's orchestra, charmed the fashionably melancholy dandies, and the dreamy beauty of the pensively dancing ladies. The Opposition and the Ministerial majority had called a truce; Lady Canning chatted with Lord Londonderry, Lady Jersey with the Duke of Wellington. Monsieur, who complimented me this year, 1822, on my lavish hospitality, had no idea that in 1793 there existed not far from him a future Minister, who pending greatness, fasted above a cemetery as a penance for his loyalty. Today, I congratulate myself on having been almost shipwrecked, glimpsed war, and shared the sufferings of the lowest class of society, just as I am thankful in times of prosperity for meeting slander and injustice. I have benefited from these lessons: life, without the ills which give it gravity, is a child's bauble.

I was *the man with forty crowns*; but equality of wealth had not yet been established, and food was no cheaper, so there was nothing to offset my rapidly emptying purse. I could not count on further help from my family, exposed in Brittany to the double scourge of the Chouan insurrection and the Terror. I saw nothing ahead but the workhouse or the Thames.

The resourceful Peltier, dug me up, or rather unearthed me in my eyrie. He had read in a newspaper, in Yarmouth, that a group of antiquaries was preparing a history of the country of Suffolk, and were seeking a Frenchman capable of deciphering some twelfth-century French manuscripts from Camden's collection. The parson of Beccles, was in charge of the enterprise, and it was him I needed to contact. '*This is for you*' Peltier told me, '*go: decipher these old papers; you can go on sending copy for the Essai to Baylis; I'll force the coward to start printing again; and you'll return to London with two hundred guineas, and your work done, come what may!*'

I tried to stammer out my objections: '*Ah! What the devil,*' he cried, '*do you reckon on staying here, in this palace, where I'm already half-frozen? If Rivarol, Champcenez, Mirabeau-Tonneau and I had been lily-livered, we'd have made a fine mess of the Actes des Apôtres! Do you know that this tale of Hingant made a hell of a row! You'd prefer both of you died of hunger, then? Ha! Ha! Ha! Pouf!...Ha! Ha!*' Peltier, bent in two, grasped his knees he was laughing so much. He had happened to sell a hundred copies of his newspaper to the Colonies; he had received payment and made the guineas jingle in his pocket. He took me away by force, with the apoplectic La Bouëtardais, and two ragged *émigrés* who were

at hand, to dine at the London Tavern. He made us drink Port, and eat roast beef and plum pudding till we were bursting. ‘*Monsieur le Comte,*’ he said to my cousin, ‘*why is your mouth all twisted?*’ La Bouëtardais, half offended, half pleased, explained as best he could; he told him how he had a sudden seizure while singing those few words: *O bella Venere!* My poor stricken friend had so dead, so numb, so worn an air, while mutilating his *bella Venere*, that Peltier, convulsed with mad laughter, contrived to upset the table, striking it from below with both feet.

On reflection, the advice of my compatriot, truly a character invented by my other compatriot Le Sage, did not seem so bad. After three days spent making enquiries and being fitted out by Peltier’s tailor, I left for Beccles with some cash that Deboffe lent me, on the basis that I would resume writing the *Essai*. I altered my name, since the English could not pronounce it, to that of Combours, which my brother had borne, and which recalled the pain and pleasure of my first youth. Ensconced at the inn, I presented the local minister with a letter from Deboffe, well regarded by the English literary world, which recommended me as a scholar of the first order. Well received, I met all the gentlemen of the district, and encountered two officers of our own Royal Navy who gave lessons in French to the neighborhood.

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 8

My provincial occupations – My brother's death – Family misfortunes – Two Frances – Hingant's letters

London, April to September 1822.

I regained my strength; the excursions I made on horseback restored my health somewhat. England, seen in detail, was gloomy, everywhere the same, with the same aspect. *Monsieur de Combourg* was invited to all the gatherings. I had my studies to thank for the first alleviation of my lot. *Cicero* was right to recommend the commerce of letters while among the sorrows of existence. The ladies were delighted to meet a Frenchman with whom they could speak French.

The misfortunes of my family, which I learnt of from the newspapers and which made my real name known, (since I could not conceal my grief) increased people's interest in me. The public pages announced the death of Monsieur de Malesherbes; that of his daughter, Madame la Présidente de Rosanbo; that of his grand-daughter, Madame la Comtesse de Chateaubriand; and that of his grandson-in-law, the Comte de Chateaubriand, my brother, executed together, on the same day, at the same hour, on the same scaffold. Monsieur de Malesherbes was an object of admiration and veneration among the English; my family connection with the defender of Louis XVI added to my hosts' kindness.

My *uncle Bedée* told me of the persecution suffered by my other relatives. My aged, incomparable mother had been thrown into a cart with other victims, and taken from the depths of Brittany to the gaols of Paris, in order to share the fate of the son she loved so dearly. My wife and my sister *Lucile*, were awaiting sentence in the dungeons at Rennes; there had been talk of imprisoning them in the Château of Combourg, which was to become a State stronghold: they were accused in their innocence of the crime of my emigration. What were our sorrows on foreign soil, compared to those of the French still living in their own land? Yet, how sad, in the midst of the sufferings of exile, to know that our very exile was a pretext for the persecution of those close to us!

Two years ago it was, that *my sister-in-law's* wedding ring was found in the gutter of the *Rue Casette*; someone brought it to me; it was broken; its two entwined strands had come apart, and hung together like links of a chain; the names engraved there were perfectly legible. How had the ring been found? Where and when had it been lost? Had the victim, a prisoner in *the Luxembourg*, passed through the Rue Casette on the way to execution? Had she dropped the ring from the tumbril? Had it been torn from her finger after death? I was deeply moved at the sight of this emblem, which, by its state and its inscription, recalled such cruel events. Something fateful and mysterious attached itself to this ring, which my sister-in-law sent me from the place of the dead, as a token of herself and my brother. I have given it to *her son*: may it not bring him ill luck!

*Dear orphan, image of your mother,  
From heaven, for you, below, I ask,  
The sweet days taken from your father,  
The children that your uncle lacks.*

This poor verse and two or three others are the only wedding gifts that I was able to fashion for my nephew when he married.

I have another relic of those misfortunes: here is what Monsieur de Contencin wrote to me, who, while searching the City archives, found the order of the Revolutionary Tribunal which sent my brother and his relatives to the scaffold:

*‘Monsieur le Vicomte,*

There is a kind of cruelty in awakening in the soul of someone who has suffered greatly the memory of those ills which have affected him the most grievously. This thought made me hesitate for a while before offering you an extremely sad document which came into my hands during my historical research. It is a death warrant signed before execution by a man who always showed himself as implacable as death, every time he found luster and virtue showered on the same head.

*I hope Monsieur le Vicomte that you will not be too dissatisfied with me for adding a paper to your family archives which revives such cruel memories. I assumed it would interest you, since I found it of value, and in consequence thought to offer it to you. If I am not being indiscreet, I can congratulate myself doubly, since I find the occasion, today, in taking this step, of expressing to you the feelings of profound respect and admiration which you have inspired in me, for many years, and with which I am, Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*Your very humble and obedient servant,*

*A. de Contencin.*

*Hôtel de la préfecture de la Seine.*

*Paris, the 28th of March, 1835.’*

Here is my reply to this letter:

*‘I made a search, Monsieur, in Sainte-Chapelle, for the documents concerning my unfortunate brother’s trial, but no one could find the warrant which you have been so good as to send me. This warrant and so many others, with their erasures, their misspelled names, will have been presented to Fouquier before God’s Tribunal: there he would certainly have had to admit to his signature. Those were the times that some regret, and about which they write volumes in admiration! Nevertheless, I envy my brother: for many years he has been beyond this sad world. I thank you infinitely, Monsieur, for the esteem that you are pleased to show me in your fine and noble letter, and beg you to accept my assurance of the very great consideration with which I have the honor to be, etc.’*

That death warrant is especially remarkable as evidence of the carelessness with which murder was committed: some names are wrongly spelled, others are erased. These formal errors, which would have been enough to invalidate the lightest sentence, did not halt the executioners; they were only exact in the matter of the hour of death: at five o’clock precisely. Here is the authentic document, copied here faithfully:

*THE ENFORCER OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL*

*The enforcer of criminal justice will not fail to attend the house of justice of the Conciergerie, in order to execute there the sentence which condemns Mousset d'Esprémenil, Chapelier, Thouret, Hell, Lamoignon Malsherbes, the wife of Lepelletier Rosambo, Chateau Brian and his wife (the correct name erased, unreadable), the widow Duchatelet, the wife of Grammont, former Duke, the wife of Rochechouart (Rochechouart), and Parmentier:*

*- 14, on pain of death. The execution will take place today, at five o'clock precisely, in the Place de la Révolution of this city.*

*The Public Prosecutor,  
H. Q. Fouquier*

*Given at the Tribunal, the third Floréal, Year Two, of the French Republic.*

*Two carts.*

The 9th Thermidor saved my mother's life; but she was left, forgotten, in the Conciergerie. The commissary for the Convention discovered her: 'What are you doing here, citizeness?' he asked; 'Who are you? Why are you still here?' My mother answered that having lost her son, she had no further interest in what was happening, and was indifferent as to whether she died in prison or elsewhere. 'But perhaps you have other children?' the commissary replied. My mother mentioned my wife and sisters, imprisoned at Rennes. An order to set them at liberty was swiftly sent, and my mother was compelled to leave.

In histories of the Revolution, they omit to paint the external picture of France to set alongside the internal picture, one which reveals the great colony of exiles, varying its effort and industry to suit the diversity of climate and the different national customs.

Outside France, everything happened individually, through changes of condition, hidden sufferings, wordless sacrifices, without reward; yet in that plethora of individuals of every pedigree, age, and sex, one fixed concept was maintained; the old France was abroad with all its prejudices and loyalties, as once the Church of God wandered the earth with its virtues and its martyrs.

Inside France, everything operated en masse; Barère proclaimed murders and victories, civil wars and foreign wars; the titanic conflicts of the Vendée and the banks of the Rhine; thrones disintegrating at the sound of our marching armies; our fleets engulfed by the waves; the mob disinterring the monarchs at Saint-Denis, and throwing the dust of dead Kings in the faces of living ones to blind them; the new France, glorying in its new-found freedoms, proud even of its crimes, stable on its own soil, extending all its frontiers, doubly armed with the executioner's blade and the soldier's sword.

In the midst of my family grief, several letters arrived from Hingant reassuring me as to his fate, letters moreover of a remarkable nature: he wrote to me in September 1795: 'Your letter of the 23rd of August is full of the most moving sentiments. I have shown them to several people who had tears in their eyes while reading them. I am almost tempted to say of them as Diderot said on the day when Rousseau shed tears over him in his prison, at Vincennes: "See how my friends love me." My illness has only proved, in truth,



*a nervous fever which caused a great deal of suffering, and for which time and patience are the best remedies. I have been reading extracts from Phaedo and Timaeus. Those books give one an appetite for death, and I have said like Cato:*

*“It must be so, Plato; thou reason’st well!”*

*I conceived an idea of my voyage, as one conceives the idea of a voyage to the Indies. I imagined I saw hosts of new objects in the world of spirits (as Swedenborg calls it), and especially that I would be freed from the effort and danger of the voyage.’*

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 9

Charlotte

London, April to September 1822.

Six miles from Beccles, in a little town called Bungay, lived an English clergyman, The Reverend Mr. Ives, a great Hellenist and mathematician. He had a wife, still young, and of charming appearance, mind, and manners, and an only daughter, aged fifteen. Introduced to this household, I was better received there than anywhere else. We drank in the old English fashion, and stayed at table for two hours after the ladies had withdrawn. Mr. Ives, who had been to America, liked to recount his travels, hear the story of mine, and talk about Newton and Homer. His daughter, who had studied in order to please him, was an excellent musician and sang as Madame Pasta does today. She re-appeared at tea and charmed away the old minister's infectious drowsiness. Leaning on the end of the piano, I listened to Miss Ives in silence.

The music being over, the young lady questioned me on France, and literature; she asked me to draw up a plan of study for her; she particularly wanted to know the Italian authors, and begged me to give her some notes on the Divine Comedy and the Gerusalemme Liberata. Little by little, I began to experience the shy charm of an affection born in the soul: I had decked out the Floridians, but I would not have dared to pick up Miss Ives' glove; I felt embarrassed when I tried to translate a passage from Tasso. I was more comfortable with that more masculine and chaste genius Dante.

Charlotte's age and mine were complementary. Into relationships which form only in the midst of one's life, a certain melancholy enters; if two people do not meet at the very outset, the memories of the beloved do not concern the part of one's life when one breathed without knowing her: those days which belong to the society of others are painful to the memory and as if divorced from one's true existence. Is there a disproportion of age? Then the drawbacks increase: the older began life before the younger was born; the younger is destined, in turn, to remain alone; one walked in solitude this side of the cradle, the other will traverse a solitude that side of the tomb; the past was a desert for the former, the future will be a desert for the latter. It is difficult to love and possess all the circumstances needed for happiness: youth, beauty, opportunity, taste, character, grace, and maturity.

After a fall from my horse, I stayed for some time at Mr. Ives' house. It was winter; my life's dreams began to flee in the face of reality. Miss Ives became more reserved; she ceased to bring me flowers; she preferred not to sing.

If I had been told that I would spend the rest of my life, unknown, at the heart of this secluded family, I would have died of joy: love only needs continuance to become at once Eden before the Fall and a Hosanna without end. Make beauty stay, youth last, and the heart never tire, and you will recreate Heaven. Love is so assuredly the supreme happiness that it is haunted by an illusion of never-ending life; it only wishes to pronounce irrevocable vows; in the absence of joy, it seeks to make sorrow eternal; a fallen angel, it still speaks the language it spoke in its incorruptible habitation; its hope is never to die; in

its twofold nature, possessed of its twofold illusions here, it tries to perpetuate itself by immortal thoughts and inexhaustible generation.

I looked forward with dismay to the time when I would be obliged to leave. On the eve of the day set for my departure, dinner was a gloomy affair. To my great astonishment, Mr. Ives withdrew after dessert taking his daughter with him, and I was left alone with Mrs. Ives: she was in a state of extreme embarrassment. I thought she intended to reproach me for an inclination she might have discovered but which I had never spoken of. She looked at me, lowered her eyes, and blushed; charming, as she was, in her confusion, there was no point of feeling that she might not have claimed for herself. At last, with an effort, overcoming the obstacle which prevented her speaking, she said to me, in English; *‘Sir, you have seen my confusion: I do not know if Charlotte pleases you, but it is impossible to deceive a mother; my daughter has certainly conceived an attachment for you. Mr. Ives and I have discussed the matter; you suit us in every respect; we think you will make our daughter happy. You no longer possess a country; you have just lost your relatives; your property has been auctioned; who then could call you back to France? Until you inherit from us, you shall live with us.’*

Of all the painful things I have endured, this was the greatest and most deeply felt. I threw myself at Mrs. Ives’ feet; I covered her hands with my kisses and tears. She thought I was weeping with happiness, and began to sob with joy. She stretched out her arm to pull the bell-rope; she called to her husband and daughter: *‘Stop!’* I cried; *‘I am married!’* She fell back in a swoon.

I went out, and without returning to my room, I left on foot. I reached Beccles, and took the mail-coach for London, after writing a letter to Mrs. Ives of which I regret not keeping a copy.

The sweetest, the most tender, and most grateful memory, of this event remain with me. Before I became known, Mr. Ives’ family was the only one which took an interest in me, and welcomed me with real affection. Poor, obscure, proscribed, without looks or charm, I was offered a secure future, a country, a delightful wife to draw me out of my solitude, a mother almost her equal in beauty, to take the place of my aged mother, and a father, well-educated, loving and cultivating literature, to replace the father of whom Heaven had deprived me; what did I possess to compensate for all that? They could have had no illusions in choosing me: I could only consider myself loved. Since that time, I have only met with one attachment noble enough to inspire me with the same confidence. As for the interest of which I seemed to be the object later, I have never known whether or not external causes, the noise of fame, the prestige of party, the glamour of high literary or political status, were the cloak which attracted such eager attention to me.

For the rest, in marrying Charlotte Ives, my role in the world would have altered: buried in a county of England, I would have become a hunting *gentleman*: not a single line would have issued from my pen; I would even have forgotten my own language, since I could write English, and the thoughts in my head were starting to shape themselves in English. Would my country have lost much by my disappearance? If I were to set aside what has been my consolation, I would say I might have already reckoned on many peaceful days, instead of the troubled days that have been my lot. The Empire, the Restoration, divisions, the disputes within France, what would I have had to do with all that? I would not have had to counteract faults, and combat errors, each morning. Is it certain that I have a true talent, and a talent worth the painful sacrifices of my life? Will I outlast my tomb? When I pass beyond, will there be, given the

transformations which will occur, in a world altered and preoccupied with other things, will there be a public to listen to me? Will I not be a man of the past, unintelligible to the new generations? Will my ideas, my sentiments, even my style not seem boring and old-fashioned to scornful posterity? Will my shade be able to say as Virgil's did to Dante: '*Poeta fui e cantai*: I was a poet, and sang.'!

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 10

#### Return to London

London, April to September 1822.

Returning to London, I found no peace: I had fled from my fate like a malefactor from his crime. How painful it must have been to a family so worthy of homage, respect and gratitude, to experience a species of rejection by the unknown they had welcomed, to whom they had offered a new home with a naturalness, an absence of suspicion, or precaution, patriarchal in character! I imagined Charlotte's grief, the deserved reproaches that they could and would heap upon me: since I had after all been ready to abandon myself to an inclination which I knew was unquestionably wrong. Had I made a confused attempt at seduction, without taking account of the blame that would accrue to my conduct? But whether by halting, as I did, in order to remain a man of integrity, or by ignoring all obstacles in order to satisfy a desire already condemned by my conduct, I could only succeed in plunging the object of that seduction into regret or sorrow.

I allowed my mind to turn from these bitter reflections to other thoughts no less filled with bitterness: I cursed my marriage, which, contracted according to the false perceptions of my then disturbed mind, had thrown me off course, and robbed me of happiness. I did not realize that because of the innate malaise from which I suffered and the romantic notions of liberty I nourished, marriage with Miss Ives would have been just as painful to me as a freer union.

One thing pure and delightful, though profoundly sad, remained with me: the image of Charlotte; that image finally prevailed over my rebellion against my fate. I was tempted, a hundred times, to return to Bungay, not to present myself before the troubled family, but to conceal myself by the roadside to see Charlotte pass by, to follow her to the church where we had the same God, if not the same altar in common, to offer that girl, through the medium of Heaven, the inexpressible ardor of my vows, and to pronounce, at least in thought, the prayer from the marriage blessing that I might have heard from a clergyman's lips in that church.

*'O, God, be pleased to join together the spirits of these two married people, and fill their hearts with true friendship. Look favorably upon your servant. Make their yoke one of love and peace, so that they may enjoy a happy fecundity; Lord, let these married people see before them their children and their children's children to the third and fourth generation, and let them reach a happy old age.'*

Drifting from resolution to resolution, I wrote Charlotte long letters which I destroyed. Each insignificant note I had received from her, served as a talisman; attached by my thought to my very steps, Charlotte, gracious, tender, followed me, in purifying them, along the paths of the *sylph*. She absorbed my faculties; she was the center through which my intellect plunged, as blood passes through the heart; she made me disgusted with all other things, since I made of them perpetual objects of comparison, favorable to her. A true and blighted passion is a poisoned leaven that occupies the depths of the soul and spoils the bread of angels.

The places where I had been, the hours and words I had shared with Charlotte, were engraved in my memory: I saw the smile of the spouse who had been destined for me; I touched her black tresses, respectfully; I pressed her beautiful arms to my breast like a chain of lilies which I might have worn about my neck. I was no sooner in some secluded spot, than Charlotte of the white hands, came to sit at my side. I divined her presence, as one breathes, at night, the perfume of flowers which one cannot see.

Deprived of Hingant's company, my walks, more solitary than ever, left me free to take with me Charlotte's image. There is not a heath, road, or church within thirty miles of London that I have not visited. The most deserted places, a patch of nettles, a gap full of thistles, anything neglected by men, became favorite spots for me, and in those spots Byron already breathed. Head resting on my hand, I gazed at those places men scorned; when their painful impression affected me too deeply, the memory of Charlotte came to delight me: I was like the pilgrim, then, who reaching a desert solitude in sight of the rocks of Mount Sinai, had heard a nightingale sing.

In London, people were surprised at my behavior. I looked at no one, I failed to reply, I did not understand what was said to me: my old friends considered me touched by madness.

## BOOK X

### CHAPTER 11

An astonishing encounter

London, April to September 1822.

What had happened at Bungay after I left? What became of that family to which I brought joy and grief?

You will bear in mind that I am now Ambassador to George IV, and write in London, in 1822, of what happened in London in 1797.

Official business obliged me, a week ago, to interrupt the narrative I am resuming today. One afternoon between twelve and one, during this interval, my valet came to tell me that a carriage was at the door, and that an English lady asked to speak to me. As I had made it a rule, in my public role, never to refuse to see anyone, I asked that the lady be shown upstairs.

I was in my study; Lady Sutton was announced; I saw a lady dressed in mourning enter, accompanied by two fine boys, also in mourning; one might have been sixteen years old, the other fourteen. I went to meet the stranger; she was so moved she could barely walk. She said to me in a faltering voice: '*My lord, do you remember me?*' Yes, I recognized Miss Ives! The years which had passed over her head had left only their springtime behind. I took her by the hand: I made her sit, and sat down by her side. I could not speak; my eyes were filled with tears; I gazed at her in silence through those tears; I felt, from what I was experiencing, how deeply I had loved her. At last, I was able to say in turn: '*And you Madame, do you recognize me?*' She raised her eyes, which she had kept lowered, and for sole response, gave me a smiling but melancholy glance like a long remembrance. Her hand was still between mine. Charlotte said to me: '*I am in mourning for my mother; my father died some years ago. These are my children.*' Saying this, she withdrew her hand, and sank back into her chair, covering her eyes with her handkerchief.

Shortly she continued: '*My lord, I am now speaking to you in the language which I practiced with you at Bungay. I feel ashamed: forgive me. My children are the sons of Admiral Sutton, whom I married three years after you left England. But today I am not calm enough to enter into details. Permit me to return later.*' I asked for her address and gave her my arm to escort her to her carriage. She trembled, and I pressed her hand against my heart.

I called on Lady Sutton the following day, I found her alone. Then there commenced between us a series of those questions begun with '*Do you remember?*' that bring back a whole lifetime. At each '*Do you remember?*' we looked at one another; looking to find in each other's faces those traces of time which measure so cruelly the distance from the moment of parting and the extent of the road travelled. I said to Charlotte: '*How did your mother tell you...*' Charlotte blushed and interrupted me quickly: '*I have come to London to ask if you would do something for Admiral Sutton's children: the eldest wishes to go to Bombay. Mr. Canning, nominated as Governor-General of India, is your friend; he could ensure my son goes out with him. I would be most grateful to you, and I would delight in owing to you the happiness of my first child.*' She emphasized these last words.

*'Ah, Madame,' I replied, 'what memories you recall? What a reversal of destinies! You who received a poor exile at your father's hospitable table; you who did not scorn his sufferings; you who thought, perhaps, of raising him to a glorious and un hoped-for rank, it is you who now ask for his support in your own country! I will see Mr. Canning; your son, however much it pains me to call him by that name, your son, shall go to India, if it is in my power. But tell me, Madame, how does my new position strike you? How do you regard me, now? That title of my lord which you employ seems very cold.'*

Charlotte replied: *'I find you unchanged, not even aged. When I spoke about you to my parents in your absence, I always gave you the title of my lord; it seemed to me you should bear it: were you not like a husband to me, my lord and master?'* That gracious woman had something of Milton's Eve about her, as she spoke those words: she was not born of another woman's womb; her beauty bore the imprint of the divine hand that had formed it.

I hurried to see Mr. Canning and Lord Londonderry; they created as many difficulties about a minor appointment as would have been made in France, but they promised to do what they could, as one promises at Court. I gave Lady Sutton an account of my efforts. I saw her again three times: on my fourth visit, she told me she was returning to Bungay. This last meeting was sorrowful. Charlotte spoke to me once more of our past secret life, our readings, our walks, music, the flowers of yesteryear, the hopes of bygone days. *'When I knew you,'* she said to me, *'no one spoke your true name: now, who has not heard of it? Do you know I have a work of yours and several letters in your handwriting? Here they are.'* She handed me a packet. *'Do not be offended if I choose to retain nothing of yours,'* and she began to cry. *'Farewell! Farewell!'* she said to me, remember my son. I will never see you again, for you will not come to seek me at Bungay. — *'I shall,'* I cried: *'I shall bring you your son's commission.'* She shook her head doubtfully, and withdrew.

On returning to the Embassy, I closed my door, and opened the packet. It only contained some trifling notes of mine and a plan of study, with comments on the English and Italian poets. I had hoped to find a letter from Charlotte; there was nothing there; but I noticed in the margins of the manuscript some notes in English, French and Latin, whose faded ink and youthful handwriting showed that they had been added to those margins long ago.

That is the story of Miss Ives and I. As I bring it to an end, it seems to me I am losing Charlotte for a second time in the same island where I lost her at first. But between what I feel for her at this moment, and what I may have felt in those moments whose tenderness I recall, lies all the extent of innocence: passions have intervened in those years between Miss Ives and Lady Sutton. I would no longer be offering an artless girl innocent longings, the sweet ingenuousness of love lies on the borders of dream. I wrote then on a wave of melancholy; I am no longer adrift on life's waves. Ah well, if I have held in my arms, a wife and a mother, she who was destined for me as a virgin bride, it has been with a kind of rage, to wither, to fill with pain and suffocate, those twenty-five years which were given to another, after having been offered to me!

I should have regard for the love I have just recalled, as the first of its kind to enter my heart; yet it was not in tune with my stormy nature, which would have corrupted it, and would have rendered me incapable of savoring those holy joys for long. It was then that embittered by misfortune, already a pilgrim overseas,



having begun my solitary voyage, it was then that the wild ideas evoked in that mysterious tale of *René*, obsessed me and made of me the most tormented of beings on this earth. Be that as it may, the chaste image of Charlotte, in allowing a few rays of true light to penetrate the depths of my heart, first dissipated there a cloud of phantoms: my daemon, like an evil genie, plunged once more into the abyss; she waited for the effects of time before making a fresh appearance.

## BOOK XI

### CHAPTER 1

A defect in my character

London, April to September 1822. (Revised December 1846)

My relations with Deboffe regarding *L'Essai sur les Révolutions* had never completely lapsed, and it was important for me to re-establish them swiftly in London to support my everyday life. But where had my previous problems come from: my obstinate silence. To understand this, you need to delve into my character.

At no time has it been possible for me to overcome that spirit of reserve and inner solitariness that prevents me talking freely about what moves me. No one can affirm without lying that I have ever uttered what the majority of people utter in their moments of pain, pleasure or vanity. Names, confessions of any degree of seriousness, rarely or ever emerge from my lips. I never speak about my passing interests, my plans, my work, my ideas, my relationships, my joys, or my sorrows, persuaded of the profound ennui that one causes others in speaking of oneself.

Sincere and truthful, I lack openness of heart: my soul always tends to shut itself off; I have never spoken fully of any matter, and I have never revealed my life except in these *Memoirs*. If I try to begin a story, the thought of its length suddenly terrifies me; after three or four words, the sound of my own voice becomes intolerable and I fall silent. As I have no faith in anything, except religion, I challenge everything: ill-will and denigration are two characteristics of the French spirit; mockery and slander, the guaranteed result of any confidences.

What benefit have I gained then from my reticent nature: that of becoming since I seemed impenetrable a product of others' imaginations, which bore no relation to my reality. Even my friends were in error concerning me, in thinking to make me better known, and embellishing me with the illusions conjured by their devotion. All the mediocrities of the antechamber, offices, news-sheets and cafes, considered me full of ambition, and I had none. Cold and detached in everyday matters, I showed nothing of the man of enthusiasm or sentiment: but my swift, precise perception quickly traversed men and events, and stripped them of all importance. Far from training me to idealize applied truth, my imagination brought the highest matters down to earth, disabusing me of my illusions. The petty and ridiculous aspect of things was always the first to strike me; to my eyes, hardly anything revealed genius or greatness. Polite, laudatory, admiring of the self-important who proclaimed themselves superior intellects, my secret contempt smiled and placed over all those faces wreathed in incense the masks of Callot. In politics, the warmth of my opinions never lasted longer than my speech or my pamphlet. In my inward and contemplative being, I was a man filled with dreams; in my outward and practical being, a man of realities. Adventurous yet orderly, passionate yet methodical, there has never been a creature more fanciful and yet practical than I, more ardent and more icy; strangely androgynous, formed of the differing seed of my mother and my father.

The portraits painted of me, lacking any real resemblance, owe that fact principally to the reticence of my speech. The crowd is too superficial, too inattentive to give time, unless it has been alerted beforehand, to viewing individuals as they truly are. Whenever, by chance, I have tried to counter one of these false judgements in my prefaces, no one has believed me. In the last resort, all things being equal, I have not insisted; and as you will always free me from the tedium of trying to persuade anyone, or seeking to prove the truth. I retreated into my heart's depths, like a hare into its form: there I again set myself to contemplating the movement of a leaf or the angle of a blade of grass.

I do not make a virtue of my unassailable circumspection in as much as it is involuntary: though it is not insincerity it has the appearance of it; it is not in harmony with happier, kinder, more easy-going, more innocent, more abundant, more communicative natures than mine. It has often harmed me in matters of feeling, and business affairs, because I could never endure explanations and reparations by means of protestations and clarifications, lamentation and tears, verbiage and reproaches, details and apology.

In the case of the Ives family, this obstinate silence of mine, regarding myself, was fatal to me in the extreme. Twenty times Charlotte's mother had enquired about my parents and had brought me to the verge of revelation. Not foreseeing where my muteness would lead, I was content, as usual, to reply in a few brief vague words. If I had not suffered from that hateful spiritual fault, no error would have been made, and I would not have displayed the appearance of having deceived the most generously hospitable of people: the truth, spoken by me at the decisive moment, does not excuse my behavior: a real wrong was committed nevertheless.

I resumed my work in the midst of my sorrows and the just reproaches I heaped on myself. I accustomed myself to the work, since it occurred to me that in acquiring fame I would render the Ives family less regretful of the interest they had shown in me. Charlotte, whom I sought to reconcile myself to through renown, presided over my labors. Her image sat before me while I wrote. When I lifted my eyes from the paper, they rested on the beloved image, as though the original had been there in reality. The inhabitants of the island of Ceylon saw the daystar rise one day in unparalleled splendor: its sphere opened, and out of it came a shining creature which said to the Ceylonese: '*I am come to reign over you.*' Charlotte, bathed in a shaft of light, reigned over me.

Let us forego these memories; memories age, and vanish, like our hopes. My life is about to change, it will unfold under other skies, in other valleys. First love of my youth, you flee with your charms! I happened to see Charlotte again, it is true, but how many years later was it, that I did see her again? Sweet light of the past, pale rose of the twilight, which edges the night, when the sun has long set!

## BOOK XI

### CHAPTER 2

*The Essai historique sur les Révolutions* – Its effect – A letter from Lemièrre, the nephew of the poet

London, April to September 1822.

Life has often been represented (by me above all), as a mountain which one climbs from one side, to hurtle down the other: it would also be valid to compare it to one of the Alps, its bald summit crowned with ice, which has no far side. Pursuing this image, the traveller always ascends and never descends; thus he has a better view of the distance he has travelled, the paths he has not taken and with whose help he would have been elevated by an easier slope: he gazes with regret and sadness at the point where he started to go astray. So, it is from the publication of the *Essai historique* that I must mark the first step of mine that made me stray from the path of peace. I had completed the first part of the great work I had planned; I wrote the last words of it caught between the idea of death (I had fallen ill again) and a vanished dream: *In somnis venit imago conjugis*: the image of a spouse appeared in sleep. Printed by Baylis, the *Essai* appeared in Deboffe's bookshop in 1797. The date is that of a transformation in my life. There are moments when our destiny, whether yielding to social pressures, obeying the dictates of nature, or commencing to make of us what we will become, suddenly swerves from its initial path, like a river changing course around a sudden bend.

The *Essai* offers a compendium of my existence, as poet, moralist, publicist and politician. To say that I hoped, inasmuch at least as I was able to hope, a great success for the work, that goes without saying: we lesser authors, little prodigies of a prodigious era, we have pretensions of maintaining a conversation with the future race; but we have no knowledge, to my mind, of posterity's place of residence, we pen its address incorrectly. When we sleep in the tomb, death will freeze our words, written or sung, so solidly, they will not melt again like *Rabelais'* frozen words.

The *Essai* became a sort of historical encyclopedia. The only volume published was already a sufficiently deep investigation; I had the remainder in manuscript, then a poet's lays and *virelais* arrived to accompany the annalist's researches and annotations, then *Les Natchez*, etc. I can scarcely understand today how I managed to carry out such extensive labors, in the midst of an active life, a wanderer subject to so many reverses. My tenacity when working explains this fecundity: in my youth, I have often written for twelve to fifteen hours with getting up from the table at which I sat, editing and reworking the same page a dozen times. I have not lost this ability for application with age: my diplomatic correspondence now, which is not allowed to interrupt my literary compositions, is entirely from my own hand.

The *Essai* made a stir among the *émigrés*: it was in contradiction to the views of my companions in misfortune: my independence regarding diverse social attitudes has almost always wounded the men with whom I have been aligned. I have in turn been the commander-in-chief of various armies whose soldiers were not of my own party: I have led the old Royalists to the achievement of public freedoms, and above all that of the freedom of the press, which they detested; I have rallied the liberals in the name of that same freedom to the Bourbon flag which they regarded with horror. *Émigré* opinion happened to attach

itself, through pride, to my person: the English Revues, having spoken of me in glowing terms, their praise reflected on the whole corps of the faithful.

I had sent copies of the *Essai* to La Harpe, Ginguené and De Sales. Lemierre, nephew of the poet of that name and translator of Gray's verses, wrote to me from Paris, on the 15th of July 1797, to tell me that my *Essai* was a great success. It is true that the *Essai* was acknowledged for a moment, it was also soon forgotten: a sudden shadow engulfed my first rays of fame.

Having become nigh on well-known, the *émigré* nobility sought me out in London. I made my way from street to street; I first left Holborn-Tottenham Court Road, and advanced as far as the Hampstead Road. There I stayed several months at the home of Mrs. O'Larry, an Irish widow, mother of a very pretty fourteen year old daughter, and fond cat-lover. Bound by this mutual passion, we had the misfortune to lose two elegant cats, white as ermine, with black tips to their tails.

Elderly neighbors visited Mrs. O'Larry, with whom I was obliged to take tea according to the ancient custom. Madame de Staël has depicted the scene in *Corinne* at Lady Edgermond's house: '*My dear, do you think the water is hot enough to add it to the tea? – My dear, I think that would be premature.*'

A very beautiful young Irish lady, Mary Neale, also came to these soirees escorted by her guardian. She found some pain in the depths of my gaze, for she said to me: '*You carry your heart in a sling*'. I carried my heart I don't know how.

Mrs. O'Larry left for Dublin; then moving once more from the eastern district colonized by poor *émigrés*, I progressed from lodging to lodging, as far as the western quarter of rich *émigrés*, among the bishops, families of the Court, and colonists from Martinique.

Peltier was back; he had married heedlessly; always boastful, wasting his resources, and frequenting his neighbors' money rather than their persons.

I made several new acquaintances, especially in the circles where I had family connections. Christian de Lamoignon, badly wounded in the leg in the Quiberon affair, and now a colleague in the Chamber of Peers, became my friend. He presented me to Mrs. Lindsay, a friend of Auguste de Lamoignon, his brother: not quite as President Guillaume de Lamoignon was installed at Basville, between Boileau, Madame de Sevigné and Bourdaluë.

Mrs. Lindsay, of Irish origin, with a dry wit, a somewhat abrupt manner, elegant height, and a pleasant figure, had nobility of soul and an elevated character: *émigrés* of note spent the evening at the fireside of this last Ninon. The old monarchy perished with all its abuses and all its graces. It will be disinterred one day, like those skeletons of queens, adorned with necklaces, bracelets, and earrings that they exhume in Etruria. At this rendezvous I encountered Monsieur Malouët and Madame du Belloy, a woman deserving of relationship, the Comte de Montlosier and the Chevalier de Panat. The latter had a well-earned reputation for his wit, slovenliness, and greed: he belonged to that set, of men of taste, who used to sit arms crossed before French society; idlers whose mission was to see everything and judge everything, they exercised the functions newspapers now exercise, without possessing their bitterness, but also without achieving their immense popular influence.

Montlosier was forced to travel because of his famous phrase about the cross of wood, a phrase which I reshaped a little, when I quoted it in the Le Génie, but which is profoundly true. On leaving France, he went to Coblenz; received badly by the Princes, he was involved in a duel, fought at night on the banks of the Rhine and was spitted. Unable to move, and seeing no blood, he asked the witnesses if the sword point had emerged behind: 'Three inches' they said after feeling around. 'Then it's nothing,' Montlosier replied, 'sir, withdraw your thrust'

Montlosier, welcomed thus for his royalist sympathies, crossed to England, and took refuge in literature, the great hospital for *émigrés* where I had a straw-pallet next to his. He obtained the editorship of the Courrier de Londres. Beside his newspaper, he wrote physico-politico-philosophical works: in one of these tracts he demonstrated that blue was the color of life because the veins turned blue after death, which indicated that life was returning to the body's surface in order to evaporate and return to the blue heavens: as I liked blue very much, I was quite charmed.

Feudally liberal, an aristocrat and democrat, a strange spirit, made of bits and pieces, Montlosier gave birth with difficulty to disparate ideas, but when he could manage to free them from the natal cord, they were often fine, and always full of vigor: opposed to priests as he was to noblemen, converted to Christianity by means of sophisms, while a lover of ancient times, he had been, under the influence of paganism, a warm supporter of freedom in theory and slavery in practice, who would feed the slave to the fish in the name of the liberty of the human race. Crushing in argument, a quibbler, daring and tousled, the former deputy of the Riom nobility nevertheless permitted himself to make concessions to the powerful: he knew how to manage his interests, but allowed no one to see him at it, and hid his weaknesses as a man behind his honor as a gentleman. I will hear nothing evil said of my hazy Auvernat, with his ballads of Mont-d'or and his polemics of the Plain; I had a liking for his heterogeneous personality. The long obscure development and swirl of his ideas, with its parentheses, throaty gasps, and tremulous cries of: 'oh! oh!' bored me (the shadowy, muddled, vaporous, and tiresome, I find abominable); but on the other hand, I was diverted by this naturalist of the volcanic regions, this lost Pascal, this orator from the mountains who ranted to the gallery as his little compatriots, the sweeps, sang from the heights of their chimneys; I liked this journalist of peat bogs and little castles, this liberal explaining the *Charter* through a Gothic window, this shepherd lord half-wedded to his cowgirl, sowing his barley himself, in the snow, in his little stony field: I was always grateful to him for having dedicated to me, in his hut in the Puy-de-Dôme, an ancient black stone, taken from a cemetery of the Gauls which he had discovered.

The Abbé Delille, another compatriot of those Auvernats, Sidoine Apollinaire, the Chancelier de l'Hospital, La Fayette, Thomas, and Chamfort, driven from the Continent by the torrent of Republican victories, had also recently established himself in London. The Emigration counted him among its ranks with pride; he sang our ills, even more reason to be enchanted with his muse. He worked hard; he had to, since Madame Delille locked him up, and only let him out when he had filled his day with a certain number of lines. One day, I had gone to see him; he was delayed, and then appeared, with very red cheeks: they say that Madame Delille used to slap him; I don't know; I only say what I saw.

Who has not heard the Abbé Delille declaim his verse? He speaks very well; his person, ugly, rumpled, animated by imagination, wonderfully suits the charm of his delivery, the nature of his talent, and his

priestly profession. The Abbé Delille's masterpiece is his translation of the Georgics, in parts close to the original in feeling; but it is as if you were reading Racine translated into the language of Louis XV.

Eighteenth century literature, aside from the few fine geniuses that dominate it, that literature placed between the classical literature of the seventeenth century and the romantic literature of the nineteenth, without lacking naturalness, lacks nature; dedicated to the arrangement of words, it is neither sufficiently original like the new school, nor sufficiently pure like the old school. The Abbé Delille was the poet of modern châteaux as the troubadour was the poet of old ones; the verse of the one, the ballads of the other, reveal the difference between the aristocracy at the center of power, and the aristocracy in a state of degeneration: the Abbé depicts readings and games of chess in country houses, where the troubadours sang of crusades and tourneys.

The distinguished members of our Church Militant were then in England: the Abbé Carron, of whom I have spoken already, in borrowing from his life of my sister Julie; the Bishop of Saint-Pol-de-Léon, a severe and narrow-minded prelate, who contributed to separating Monsieur le Comte d'Artois further and further from his century; the Archbishop of Aix, slandered perhaps because of his worldly success; another wise and pious bishop, but so avaricious, that if had experienced the misfortune of losing his soul, he would never have bought it back. Almost all misers are men of intelligence: I ought to be totally stupid.

Among the French in the western region of London, one might name Madame de Boigne, charming, spiritual, full of talent, extremely pretty and the youngest of all; she has since represented, with her father, the Marquis of Osmond, the French Court, in England, much better than my savagery achieved. She writes now, and her talent depicts what she has seen, wonderfully well.

Mesdames de Caumont, de Gontaut, and du Cluzel also inhabited that quarter of exiled felicity, that is, if I am not confused regarding Madame de Caumont and Madame du Cluzel, whom I had audience with in Brussels.

Madame la Duchesse de Duras, was certainly in London at this time; I would not meet her till ten years later. How many times in life one passes by what would give delight, like a sailor crossing the waters of a land enamored of the sun, which he has missed, beyond the horizon, by a day's sailing! I write this by the banks of the Thames, and tomorrow a letter will go in the post to tell Madame de Duras, on the banks of the Seine, that I have met again with my first memory of her.

## BOOK XI

### CHAPTER 3

Fontanes – Cléry

London, April to September 1822.

From time to time, the Revolution brought us *émigrés* of a new kind with fresh opinions; various layers of exiles formed: as the earth contains beds of sand or clay, deposited by the waves of the flood. One of these waves brought me a man whose demise I still deplore today, a man who was my guide in literature and whose friendship has been one of the honors and consolations of my life.

In Book IV of these *Memoirs* you have seen that I met Monsieur de Fontanes in 1789: it was last year, in Berlin, that I learnt the news of his death. He was born at Niort, of a noble and Protestant family: his father had the misfortune to kill his brother-in-law in a duel. The young Fontanes, raised by a very worthy brother, came to Paris. He saw Voltaire die, and that great representative of the eighteenth century inspired his first lines: his poetic attempts were noticed by La Harpe. He undertook several works for the theatre, and befriended a charming actress, Mademoiselle Desgarcins. Lodged near the Odéon, wandering around the Chartreuse, he celebrated solitude there. He had met a friend destined to become mine also, Monsieur Joubert. The Revolution arrived: the poet became involved with one of those static parties that vanishes: torn apart by the party of progress which drags it forward, and the retrograde party which holds it back. The monarchists connected Monsieur de Fontanes with the editorship of the *Modérateur*. When times grew worse, he took refuge at Lyon, and married there. His wife gave birth to a son: during the siege of the town which the Revolutionaries had named a *Commune affranchie* (liberated), as Louis XI, while banishing its citizens, had called Arras a *Ville franchise*, Madame de Fontanes was obliged to move her infant's cradle to protect it from the shelling. Returning to Paris after the *9th Thermidor*, Monsieur de Fontanes founded the *Mémorial*, with Monsieur de La Harpe and the Abbé de Vauxelles. Proscribed on the *18th Fructidor*, England became his port of refuge.

Monsieur de Fontanes has been, with Chénier, the last writer of the elder branch of the Classical school: his prose and his verse are akin and belong to the same order of merit. His thoughts and imagery possess a forgotten melancholy from the age of Louis XIV, which only recognizes the austere and sacred sadness of religious eloquence. That melancholy is found amongst all the works of the bard of *Jour des Morts*, like the imprint of the age in which he lived; it fixes the date of his appearance; it shows that he was born after Rousseau, in his taste adhering to Fénelon. If one were to reduce the writings of Monsieur de Fontanes to two quite thin volumes, one of prose, the other of verse, they would form the most elegant of funeral monuments that one could raise over the tomb of the Classical school. (*It is to be raised through the filial piety of Madame Christine de Fontanes; Monsieur de Saint-Beuve has adorned the pediment of the monument with his ingenious words. Note: Paris, 1839*)

Among the papers my friend left behind, may be found several cantos of a poem on *Grece sauvée*, books of odes, and diverse poems, etc. He published nothing more himself: since that critic, so subtle, enlightened, and impartial, when political opinion did not blind him, had a terrible fear of criticism. He had been royally unjust towards Madame de Staël. In an article on the *Forêt de Navarre*, Garat, full of



envy, thought to cut short his poetic career at its inception. Fontanes, on his appearance, killed off the affected school of Dorat, but was unable to re-establish the Classical school which ultimately touched on the language of Racine.

Among the posthumous odes of Monsieur de Fontanes, there is one on the *Anniversary* of his Birth: it has all the charm of *Jour des Morts*, with a deeper and more personal sentiment. I only remember these two verses:

*'Age is already here with its sufferings:  
Brief hopes? Are they all the future brings?  
What does the past grant? Errors, and regret.  
Such is man's destiny; he learns with age:  
But what use is the sage,  
Now so little time is left?*

*Past, present, future, they all grieve me:  
Life in its decline for me lacks glory;  
In the mirror of time, its charms are gone.  
Pleasure! Go seek love and youthfulness;  
Leave me to sadness,  
And do not condemn!'*

If anything in the world was bound to be antipathetic to Monsieur de Fontanes, it was my literary style. A revolution in French literature began with me, and the so-called Romantic school: however, my friend, instead of being revolted by my barbarity, conceived a passion for it. I saw immense amazement on his face when I read bits of Les Natchez, Atala and René to him; he could not analyze these works according to normal critical rules, rather he realized that he was entering a new world; he saw nature afresh; he understood a language which he could not speak. I received excellent advice from him; I owe to him whatever is correct in my style; he taught me to respect the sounds; he prevented me from falling into over-extravagant invention and the harshness of execution of my disciples.

It was a great joy to meet him again in London, feted by the emigration; they demanded cantos of *Grèce sauvée* from him; they crowded round to hear. He lodged near me; we were never apart. We assisted together at a scene worthy of those unfortunate times: Cléry having recently disembarked, we read the manuscript of his *Memoirs*. Imagine the emotion of an audience of exiles, listening to the *valet de chambre* of Louis XVI, recounting, as an eye witness, the suffering and death of the prisoner of the Temple! The Directory, fearing Cléry's memoirs, published an edition of them with interpolations, which had the author speaking like a lackey and Louis XVI like a street-porter: among the base tricks of the Revolutionaries, this was one of the nastiest.

#### A PEASANT FROM THE VENDÉE

Monsieur du Theil, Monsieur the Comte d'Artois' *chargé d'affaires* in London, was quick to seek out Fontanes: he in turn begged me to introduce him to the Princes' agent. We discovered him surrounded by all the defenders of the throne and altar who walked the pavements of Piccadilly, by a host of spies and

knights of industry who had escaped from Paris under various names and disguises, and by a swarm of adventurers, Belgian, German, Irish, vendors of counter-revolution. In a corner of this crowd was a man of thirty to thirty-two whom no one noticed, and who only paid attention himself to an engraving of the death of General Wolfe. Struck by his appearance, I enquired about his person: one of my neighbors replied: 'He's no one; a peasant from the Vendée, a messenger with a letter from his leaders.'

This man, who was no one, had seen Cathelineau die, the first general of the Vendée and a peasant like himself; Bonchamp, in whom Bayard lived again; Lescure, armed with a hair-shirt, no proof against a bullet; General d'Elbée, executed by firing squad while seated in an armchair, his wounds preventing him from meeting death while standing; and La Rochejaquelein, whose death the patriots ordered verified, so as to reassure the Convention in the midst of its victories. This man, who was no one, had been involved in the capture and re-capture of towns, villages, and redoubts, in seven hundred individual actions and seventeen formal battles; he had fought against an army of three hundred thousand regulars, and six to seven hundred thousand conscripts and National Guards; he had helped to capture a hundred canon, and fifty thousand rifles; he had passed through the columns from hell, companies of incendiaries commanded by *Conventionnels*; he found himself in the midst of an ocean of fire, which, on three occasions, rolled its waves towards the woods of the Vendée; at last, he had seen three hundred thousand *Hercules* of the plough perish, companions in labor, and seen a thousand square miles of fertile country change to a desert of ashes.

The two Frances met on this ground levelled for them. Every drop of blood, every memory of the France of the Crusades that still remained, combated whatever of fresh blood, and hope existed in Revolutionary France. The victor acknowledged the greatness of the vanquished. Turreau, the Republican general, declared that: '*the Vendéans will be placed by history in the front rank of military nations.*' Another general wrote to Merlin de Thionville: '*Troops who have beaten such Frenchmen can well take pride in fighting all the other nations.*' The legions of Probus, in their song, say as much of their forefathers. Bonaparte called the battles of the Vendée '*the battles of giants.*'

In the waiting room crowd, I was the only person to treat with admiration and respect this representative of the ancient Jacques, who, in throwing off the yoke of their lords completely, under Charles V, repulsed the foreign invader: I seemed to be looking at a son of those communes of the age of Charles VII, who with the minor provincial nobility, re-conquered the soil of France, foot by foot, furrow by furrow. He had the indifferent air of a savage; his look was grey and inflexible like a rod of iron; his lower lip quivered over gritted teeth; his hair hung from his head in serpent locks, seemingly lifeless, but ready to spring upwards again; his arms, hanging by his sides, gave a nervous twitch to enormous wrists marked by sabre cuts; he might have been taken for a sawyer of longstanding. His physiognomy expressed a working man's rustic nature, placed, by the powers that be, at the service of ideas and interests contrary to that nature; the inborn fidelity of the vassal, the simple faith of the Christian, mingled there with a rough plebeian independence accustomed to value itself and do itself justice. The feeling for liberty seemed in him to be no more than the strength of his hand and the intrepidity of his heart. He spoke no more than a lion does; he scratched himself like a lion, yawned like a lion, turned to one side like a bored lion, dreaming, it would seem, of blood and the wild: his knowledge was like that of the dead.

What men, everywhere, the French were then: what a race we are today! But the Republicans had their leadership with them, amongst them, while the Royalist leadership was outside France. The Vendéans

deputed for the exiles; the giants sent a request for leadership to the pygmies. The rustic messenger I gazed at had seized the Revolution by the throat, and cried out: 'Come; follow me; it will do you no harm; it can't move; I'm holding it.' No one wanted to follow: then Jacques Bonhomme released the Revolution once more, and Charette broke his sword.

## MY WALKS WITH FONTANES

While I was indulging in these reflections on the ploughman, like those of another sort I had indulged in at the sight of Mirabeau and Danton, Fontanes obtained a private audience with the person he called amusingly the *Controller General of Finances*: he emerged highly satisfied, since Monsieur du Theil had promised to support the publication of my works, and Fontanes thought only of me. It was impossible to find a better man: reticent regarding what concerned himself he was all courage for a friend; he showed it, at the time of my resignation following the death of the Duke d'Enghien. In conversation he bristled with ridiculous literary passions. In politics, he talked nonsense; the crimes of the Convention had induced in him a horror of liberty. He detested the newspapers, philosophizing, ideology, and he communicated that dislike to Bonaparte, when he drew near the master of Europe.

We went on walks in the countryside; we would stop beneath one of those large spreading elms in the meadows. Leaning against the trunk of the elm, my friend would tell me about his former travels in England before the Revolution, and recite the lines he had once addressed to two young ladies, who had become old in the shadow of the towers of Westminster; those towers which he had found standing as he had left them, while at their base were buried the hours and illusions of his youth.

We often dined in some solitary tavern in Chelsea, beside the Thames, and talked of Milton and Shakespeare: they had seen what we were seeing; had sat like us by the river, for us a foreign river, for them that of their homeland. At night we returned to London, in the fading light of the stars, which submerged one after another in the City fog. We reached our lodgings, guided by the flickering lamps which barely marked a route for us through the smoke from coal fires reddened around each street light: so passes the life of a poet.

We saw London in detail: an experienced exile, I served as cicerone to the conscripted exiles that the Revolution produced, young and old: there was no legal age to qualify for unhappiness. In the middle of one of these excursions, we were surprised by a thunderstorm, and were forced to take refuge in the alleyway of an insignificant mansion whose door was by chance open. There we met the Duke de Bourbon: I saw for the first time, at *this* Chantilly, a prince who was not yet the last of the Condés.

The Duke de Bourbon, Fontanes and I, all equally proscribed, sought shelter, on foreign soil, under a poor man's roof, from the same storm! Fata viam invenient: Fate finds a way.

Fontanes was recalled to France. He embraced me, vowing that we would soon be reunited. Arriving in Germany, he wrote me the following letter:

*28th of July 1798.*

*If you have felt regret at my departure from London, I swear to you that mine has been no less real. You are the second person in whom, in the course of my life, I have found a heart and imagination like my own. I will never forget the consolations you have introduced me to, in exile and in a foreign land. My dearest and most constant thought, since I left you, concerns Les Natchez. What you read me of it, especially in those last days, is admirable, and has not vanished from my memory. But the charm of the poetic ideas you left me with disappeared in an instant on my arrival in Germany. The most terrible news from France has followed that which I showed you on leaving. I spent five or six days in the cruelest perplexity. I even feared my family might be persecuted. My terrors are much abated today. Even the misfortunes have been quite light; they threaten more than they perpetrate, and it is not against people of my age that the executioners bear a grudge. The last mail brought me assurances of peace and goodwill. I can continue my journey, and will be travelling at the beginning of next month. I will be staying close to the forest of Saint-Germain, with my family, my Gréce, and my books, how can I not add Les Natchez too! The unexpected storm that has just taken place in Paris was caused, I am certain, by the blunders of the leaders and agents you know of. I have had obvious proof of it in my hands. Because of my certainty, I am writing to Great Pulteney Street (where Monsieur du Theil is staying), with all possible politeness, but also with all the care that prudence demands. I wish to avoid all correspondence next month, and I am leaving it totally in doubt as to whom I will take with me, and the location I select. As to other things, I still speak of you in accents of friendship, and wish with all my heart that the hopes of my being useful to you, that you may have vested in me, nourish the warm feelings shown me in that regard, and which are so much due to your person and great talent. Work, work, my dear friend, and become illustrious. You can achieve it: the future is yours. I hope that the promise so often repeated by the Controller General of Finances is at least fulfilled in part. That consideration consoles me, since I cannot endure the thought that a fine work might be lost for lack of support. Write to me; let our hearts commune, let our muses always be friends. Never doubt that, as long as I can travel our country freely, I shall be preparing a beehive and a flowery glade for you there, next to mine. My friendship is unalterable. I will be lonely in so much as I am not with you. Tell me about your labors. I wish you the joy of completing them: I have finished half of a new canto on the banks of the Elbe, and I am happier with it than with all the rest.*

*Adieu, I embrace you tenderly, and am your friend,*

*Fontanes.'*

Fontanes tells me he is composing verse while changing his place of exile. One can never rob a poet of all he has; he carries his lyre with him. Leave the swan its wings; each night unknown waves will repeat melodious cries that would be better heard on the Eurotas.

*The future is yours:* did Fontanes speak true? Ought I to congratulate myself on his prediction? Alas! The future he announced is already past: shall I possess another?

That first affectionate letter from the foremost friend I encountered in my life, and who after that date marched in step with me for twenty-three years, warns me painfully of my increasing isolation. Fontanes is no more; a profound grief, the tragic death of a son, sent him to the grave before his time. Almost all the people I have spoken of in these *Memoirs* have vanished; it is a Register of Deaths that I hold. A few more years, and I, condemned to catalogue the dead, will leave no one behind to inscribe my name in the book of absentees.

But if I must remain alone, if no other being who loves me remains to conduct me to my last refuge, I need a guide less than others: I am making my enquiries about the road, I have studied the places I must pass through, I have sought to know what happens at the last. Often, at the edge of a grave into which the coffin is lowered by means of ropes, I have heard the ropes groan; then I have heard the sound of the first spade-full of earth fall on the coffin: at each new spade-full the hollow noise diminished; the earth in filling up the hole, made the eternal silence above the surface of the coffin deepen, little by little.

Fontanes! You wrote to me: *Let our muses always be friends*; you did not write in vain.

## BOOK XI

### CHAPTER 4

The death of my mother – Return to Religion

London, April to September 1822.

*‘Alloquar? audiero numquam tua verba loquentem?  
Nunquam ego te, vita frater amabilior,  
Aspiciam posthac? at, certe, semper amabo!’*

*‘Am I never to speak to you? Never to hear your voice? Never to see you, brother more beloved than life?  
Ah! I will always love you!’*

I had just lost a friend, I then lost a mother: it was necessary to repeat the lines Catullus addressed to his brother. In our valley of tears, just as in hell, there is some unknown eternal lament, which represents the lowest depth or the dominant note of human grief; one hears it ceaselessly, and it would continue if all created pain should chance to fall silent.

A letter from Julie which I received shortly after that of Fontanes, confirmed my sad remark regarding my progressive isolation: Fontanes urged me *to work, to become illustrious*; my sister pressed me to renounce writing: one proposed glory, the other oblivion. You have seen from my account of Madame de Farcy that she was prone to such ideas; she had grown to hate literature, because she regarded it as one of her life’s temptations.

Saint-Servan, 1st July 1798.

*‘My dear, we have just lost the best of mothers; it is with regret that I tell you of this sad blow. We shall have ceased to live, when you cease to be the object of our solicitude. If you knew how many tears your errors have caused our venerable mother to shed, how deplorable they appear to all who think and profess not only piety but reason; if you knew this, perhaps it would help to open your eyes, and induce you to renounce writing; and if Heaven, moved by our prayers, permits our reunion, you will find all the happiness among us that can be enjoyed on earth; you would grant us that happiness also, since there is none for us, as long as we lack your presence, and have reason to be anxious about your fate.’*

Ah! Why did I not follow my sister’s advice! Why did I go on writing? If my times had lacked my writings, would anything of the events and spirit of those times have altered?

Thus, I had lost my mother; thus I had troubled her last hours! While she was breathing her last sigh far from her last living son, praying for him, what was I doing, here in London? Perhaps I was out walking in the cool of the morning, while the death-sweat was drenching my mother’s brow, and my hand not there to wipe it away!

The filial affection I retained for Madame de Chateaubriand went deep. My childhood and youth were intimately linked to the memory of my mother; all I knew came to me from her. The idea that I had poisoned the last days of the woman who carried me in her womb, made me despair: I threw my copies of the *Essai* into the fire, as the instrument of my crime; if it had been possible for me to annihilate the work, I would have done so without hesitation. I did not recover from this grief until the idea came to me of expiating the effect of my first work by a religious work: this was the origin of *Le Génie du Christianisme*.

*‘My mother,’ I wrote in the first preface to that work, ‘after being locked in jail at the age of seventy-two, imprisoned there still when one of her sons died, expired eventually on the pallet to which her misfortunes had brought her. The memory of my errors cast a great bitterness over her last days; at her death, she charged one of my sisters with recalling me to the religion in which I was raised. My sister sent me details of my mother’s last desire. When that letter reached me across the sea, my sister herself was no more; she too had died of the effects of her imprisonment. Those two voices from the tomb, that death which acted as Death’s interpreter, impressed me powerfully. I became a Christian. I did not yield, I must admit, to great supernatural enlightenment: my conviction came from the heart; I wept and I believed.’*

I exaggerated my faults; the *Essai* was not an impious book, but a book of doubt and sorrow. Through the shadows of that book, glides a ray of the Christian light that shone on my cradle. It required no great effort to return from the skepticism of the *Essai* to the certainty of *Le Génie du Christianisme*.

## BOOK XI

### CHAPTER 5

Le Génie du Christianisme – A letter from the Chevalier de Panat

London, April to September 1822.

When, after the sad news of Madame de Chateaubriand's death, I resolved to make a sudden change of course, the title *Le Génie de Christianisme*, which I thought of instantly, inspired me; I set to work; I labored at it with the ardor of a son building a mausoleum to his mother. My material was that which my previous studies had been gathering and rough-hewing for some time. I knew the works of the Fathers better than they are known these days; I had studied them in order to oppose them and having entered on that path with ill intentions, instead of leaving it as victor, I left it vanquished.

As to history proper, I had occupied myself with it specifically in composing the *Essai sur les Révolutions*. The Camden antiquities I had recently examined had made me familiar with the institutions and manners of the Middle Ages. Finally my daunting manuscript of *Les Natchez*, of two thousand three hundred and ninety-three folio pages contained all the *Génie du Christianisme* might need in the way of nature description: I could draw heavily on that source, as I had already for the *Essai*.

I wrote the first part of the *Génie du Christianisme*. Dulau, who had become booksellers to the *émigré* French clergy, agreed to publish it. The first sheets of the first volume were printed.

The work thus begun in London in 1799 was only completed in Paris, in 1802: see the different prefaces to *Le Génie du Christianisme*. A species of fever consumed me during the whole time of its writing: no one will ever know what it was like to carry *Atala* and *René* at the same moment in one's brain, blood and soul, and to involve in the painful birth of those passionate twins the effort of composing the remaining parts of *Le Génie du Christianisme*. The memory of Charlotte penetrated and warmed it all: moreover a first longing for glory inflamed my exalted imagination. This longing arose in me from filial tenderness; I wanted to create a great stir, so that the sound of it would rise to where my mother was, and the angels would bring her my solemn expiation.

As one item of study leads to another, I could not occupy myself with French scholarship, without taking account of the people and literature amongst which I was living; I was drawn towards this other research. My days and nights were spent in reading, writing, taking lessons in Hebrew from a knowledgeable priest, the Abbé Caperan, consulting the libraries and men of learning, roaming the fields with my endless daydreams, and in making and receiving visits. If there are retroactive effects, ones symptomatic of future events, I ought to have been able to detect the noise and tremor of the work which was to make me famous, in the seething of my spirit and the palpitations of my muse.

A few readings of my first sketches served to inform me. Readings provide excellent input, as long as they do not involve the obligation to flatter for money. As long as an author is honest, he soon knows, from other's instinctive reaction, the weak parts of his work, and especially whether the work is too long or too short, whether he has kept to, fallen short of, or exceeded the just measure. I received a letter from



the Chevalier de Panat concerning readings of the as yet unknown work. The letter is delightful: the sharp wit and mockery of the slovenly Chevalier had not seemed open to addressing itself to poetry in this way. I do not hesitate to give you this letter, documenting my history, though it is smeared from end to end with praise, as if the shrewd author had taken pleasure in spilling his inkwell over his letter:

*‘This Monday.*

*‘Goodness! What a fascinating reading, this morning, which I owe to your extreme kindness! Our religion has counted among its defenders great geniuses, illustrious Fathers of the Church: those athletes handled all the weapons of reason with vigor; unbelief was vanquished; but that was insufficient; it was necessary to demonstrate all the charms of that admirable religion; it was necessary to show how suited it is to the human heart, and reveal the magnificent pictures it offers to the imagination. It is not here a theologian of the schools, but a great painter and man of feeling who reveals a fresh horizon. Your work was missed, and you were called to do it. Nature has endowed you liberally with the fine qualities it demanded: you belong to another century...*

*Ah! If the truths of feeling come first in the order of nature, no one will demonstrate those of our religion more adequately than you; you will confound impiety at the door of the temple and you will introduce sensitive spirits and feeling hearts to the inner sanctuary. You picture again for me those ancient philosophers who gave out their teachings their heads crowned with flowers and their hands full of sweet perfumes. That is indeed a weak representation of your spirit, so tender, classical and pure.*

*I congratulate myself every day on the happy circumstance that brought me close to you; I cannot ever forget that it was through Fontanes’ generosity; I love him the more, and my heart will never distinguish between two names which fame must unite, if Providence should open for us the gates of our country.*

*Chevalier de Panat.’*

The Abbé Delille also heard the reading of several extracts from *Le Génie du Christianisme*. He seemed surprised, and he did me the honor, a little later, of versifying the prose that had pleased him. He naturalized my savage flowers of America in his various French gardens, and cooled my wine, which was a little too heated, in the icy water of his clear fountain.

The incomplete edition of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, which I had begun in London, differs somewhat in its order of contents from the edition published in France. The Consular Censor, who soon became the Imperial one, showed himself to be extremely touchy on the question of kings: their person, honor and virtue were already dear to him in anticipation. Fouché’s police could already see the white dove with the sacred phial descending from the sky, symbols of Bonaparte’s ingenuousness and of revolutionary innocence. The sincere believers in the Republican processions at Lyon forced me to cut a chapter entitled the Royal atheists, and to disseminate the paragraphs of it here and there in the body of the work.

## BOOK XI

### CHAPTER 6

My uncle, Monsieur de Bedée – His eldest daughter

London, April to September 1822.

Before continuing these literary considerations, I must interrupt them a moment, to take leave of my uncle Bedée: alas, that is to take leave of my life's first joys: *freno non remorante dies*: there is no bridle to curb the flying days. Consider the ancient tombs in ancient crypts themselves conquered by age, blank and lacking titles, having lost their inscriptions, they are forgotten like the name of those they enclose.

I had written to my uncle on the subject of my mother's death; he replied to me in a long letter, in which were touching words of regret; but three quarters of his double folio pages were dedicated to my genealogy. Above all he recommended me, when I returned to France, to research the arms *quartered with Bedée*, conferred on my brother. Thus, for this venerable *émigré*, there had been neither exile, nor ruin, nor the destruction of close relatives, nor the execution of Louis XVI, nor the warning presented by the Revolution; nothing had changed, nothing had occurred; he was still at the point of the Breton States, and the Assembly of Nobles. This fixity in the man's ideas is most striking in the midst of and the presence of the alterations to his body, the flight of the years, the loss of his relatives and friends.

When the *émigrés* returned, my uncle Bedée retired to Dinan, where he died, seven miles from Monchoix, without seeing it again. My cousin Caroline, the eldest of my three cousins, is still alive. She remains an old maid, despite the respectful advances made to her former youth. She writes me letters devoid of spelling, where she addresses me as *tu*, calls me *Chevalier*, and talks of the good old days: *in illo tempore*: in those times. She was blessed with beautiful dark eyes and a pretty waist; she danced like La Camargo, and she thinks she remembers that in secret I bore her a shy love. I reply in the same tone, setting aside, as she has, my age, my honors and my fame: 'Yes, dear Caroline, your *Chevalier* etc.' It is thirty or so years since we met: Heaven be praised! For, God knows, if we ever came to embrace to each other, what a figure we should cut!

Gentle, patriarchal, innocent, honorable family friendship, your age has passed! We are no longer tied to the earth by a multitude of roots, shoots and flowers; we are born and die now, one by one. Those living are urged to hurl the dead into Eternity, and dispose of the corpse. Among friends, some attend the coffin to the church, muttering about the loss of time and the disturbance to their routine; others take their devotion as far as following the procession to the cemetery; the grave filled, all memory is effaced. You will never return, days of religion and tenderness, when the son died in the same house, the same chair, close to the same hearth where his father and grandfather had died, surrounded, as they had been, by weeping children and grandchildren, on whom the last paternal blessing descended!

Adieu, my dear uncle! Adieu, my mother's family, which is vanishing like the rest of my family! Adieu, my long ago cousin, you who love me still, as you loved me when we listened to our good aunt Boisteilleul lamenting over *The Sparrow-hawk*, or when you assisted at the repetition of my nurse's prayer, in the Church of Notre-Dame de Nazareth! If you survive me, accept the share of gratitude and

affection I bequeath you here. Never think the smile that shaped itself on my lips, in speaking of you, was a false one: my eyes, I assure you, are full of tears.

## BOOK XII

### CHAPTER 1

DIGRESSIONS: English Literature – The withering away of the old schools –  
Historians – Poets – Publicists - Shakespeare

London, April to September 1822. (Revised February 1845)

My studies related to *Le Génie du Christianisme* led me gradually (as I have said) to a deeper study of English literature. When, after 1792, I sought refuge in England, I was forced to revise most of the judgements I had garnered from the critics. With regard to historians, Hume was renowned as a Tory and a backward-looking writer: he was accused, like Gibbon, of having overloaded the English language with Gallicisms; his heir, Smollett, was preferred. A philosopher during his life, who became a Christian before his death, Gibbon was remembered, in that way, as moved and converted by man's poverty. One still spoke of Robertson because of his terseness.

As regards the poets, *Elegant Extracts* introduced the exile to selections from Dryden: one did not excuse Pope's rhymes, though one visited his house at Twickenham and cut a twig from the weeping willow planted by him, withering like his fame.

Blair was considered a critic tedious after the French manner: he was placed well below Johnson. As for the old *Spectator*, it was consigned to the attic.

English political works held little interest for us. Treatises on economics were less limited; calculations concerning the wealth of nations, the employment of capital, and the balance of trade, applied in part to European countries.

Burke took on a national political identity: in declaring himself opposed to the French Revolution, he drew his country into that long train of hostilities which ended on the field of Waterloo.

However, the great figures remained. One encountered Milton and Shakespeare in particular. Did Montmorency, Biron, Sully, successively French ambassadors to Elizabeth I and James I, never hear tell of a strolling player, an actor in his own comedies and those of others? Did they ever pronounce the name, so barbarous in French, of Shakespeare? Did they suspect that there a glory existed before which their honors, their pomp, their rank, would be nullified? Well! The actor charged with the role of the ghost in *Hamlet*, was the great phantom, the shadow of the Middle Ages who rose above the world, like the star of night, at the moment in which those ages descended among the dead: vast centuries which Dante opened and Shakespeare closed.

In the *Memorials* of Whitelocke, a contemporary of the bard of *Paradise Lost*, one reads of: 'A certain blind person, named Milton, Latin Secretary to the Parliament.' Molière, the *ham*, played Pourceaugnac, while Shakespeare, the buffoon, grimaced as *Falstaff*.

Those veiled travellers, who appear from time to time to sit at our table, are treated by us as ordinary guests; we ignore their true nature until they day they vanish. Leaving earth, they are transfigured, and say to us like the heavenly messenger to Tobit: *'I am one of the seven who appear before the Lord.'* But if they are misjudged by men in their travels, these divinities are not misjudged by each other. *'What needs my Shakespeare,'* wrote Milton, *'for his honour'd bones, the labour of an age in piled stones?'* Michelangelo envying the destiny and genius of Dante; cried:

*'Fuss'io pur lui! ...  
Per l'aspro esilio suo, co' la virtute,  
Dare' del mondo il più felice stato.'*

*'To be such as him! For his bitter exile and his virtue, I would give the world's greatest joys!'*

Tasso celebrated Camoëns who was still almost unknown, and served to make him famous. Is there anything more admirable than this society of illustrious equals revealing themselves to each other by means of signs, greeting each other, and speaking together in a language belonging only to themselves?

Was Shakespeare lame like Lord Byron, Walter Scott and the *Prayers*, daughters of Jupiter? If indeed he was, the Stratford Boy, far from being ashamed of his infirmity, like Childe Harold, did not fear speaking of it to one of his mistresses:

*'...lame by fortune's dearest spite.'*

Shakespeare should have had many loves, if one reckoned one per sonnet. The creator of *Desdemona* and *Juliet* grew old without ceasing to be in love. Was the unknown woman addressed in delightful verse proud and happy to be the subject of Shakespeare's sonnets? One may doubt it: fame is for an old man what diamonds are for an old woman; they adorn but cannot improve.

*'No longer mourn for me when I am dead',* says the English tragedian to his mistress, *'...if you read this line, remember not the hand that writ it; for I love you so, that I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot, if thinking on me then should make you woe. Oh, if, I say, you look upon this verse, when I perhaps compounded am with clay, do not so much as my poor name rehearse, but let your love even with my life decay...'*

Shakespeare loved, but he thought no more of love than other things: a woman for him was a flower, a bird, a breeze, something delightful that passes. Through heedlessness or ignorance of his future destiny, through his birth, which found him far from rank, beyond conditions which he could not affect, he seems at first to have taken life for a thoughtless, unoccupied hour, as a swift, sweet moment of leisure.

Shakespeare, in his youth, met aged monks turned out of their cloisters, who had met with Henry VIII's reforms, his dissolution of the monasteries, his fools, wives, mistresses, executioners. When the poet left this life, Charles I was sixteen years old.

So, with one hand Shakespeare might have touched the white hairs, which the sword of the last Tudor but one threatened, with the other the dark haired poll of the second Stuart, removed by the axe of the

Parliamentarians. Pressing on those tragic brows, high Tragedy thrust them into the grave; he filled the intervening years of his life with ghosts, blind kings, ambitious men punished, and unfortunate women, in order to link, by his parallel fictions, the reality of the past to the reality of the future.

Shakespeare is among the five or six writers who possessed all that was needed to nourish thought; these mother-geniuses seem to have given birth to and suckled all the rest. Homer created Classical antiquity: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Horace, Virgil are his sons. Dante engendered modern Italy, from Petrarch to Tasso. Rabelais created French literature; Montaigne, La Fontaine, Molière were his descendants. England is all Shakespeare, and even in modern times he has given his language to Byron, his dialogue to Walter Scott.

Frequently one renounces these great masters; one rebels against them; one tallies their faults; one accuses them of being boring, over-long, idiosyncratic, in bad taste, while stealing and dressing oneself in their feathers; but one struggles in vain under their yoke. All is painted in their colors; everywhere is imprinted with their steps; they invented words and names which went to swell the common vocabulary of nations; their expressions became proverbs, their fictional characters changed into real characters which possess heirs and a lineage. They opened up horizons from which rays of light pour; they sowed ideas, seeds of a thousand others; they furnished images, subjects, styles to all the arts: their works are the mines or the wombs of the human spirit.

Such geniuses occupy the first rank; their immensity, variety, fecundity, originality, made them known above all for their rules, examples, forms, types of diverse intelligence, as if there were four or five human races, derived from a single stem of which the rest are merely the branches. Let us be wary of criticising the disorder into which these powerful beings sometimes fell; let us not imitate the cursed Ham; let us not laugh if we encounter, naked and asleep, in the shadow of the grounded Ark in the mountains of Armenia, the one and only navigator of the flood. Let us respect the diluvian sea-captain who recommenced the creation when the waterfalls from the sky had ceased: pious children, blessed by our father, let us cover him discreetly with our cloak.

Shakespeare, in his lifetime, never thought he would live on after his life was done: what does my hymn of admiration matter to him today? In admitting all these suppositions, in reasoning about the truths or errors with which the human spirit is penetrated or filled, what does fame mean to Shakespeare, the noise of which cannot rise to his level? A Christian? In the midst of eternal joys, does he trouble himself about the nothingness of earth? A Deist? Free of the shades of matter, lost among the splendors of God, does he cast a glance towards the grain of sand where he passed his life? An Atheist? He lies in a sleep without breath or re-awakening, called death. Nothing is vainer, then, than glory beyond the tomb, unless it has given life to friendship, been an aid to virtue, a helper in adversity, and allowed us to enjoy the heaven of an idea, consoling, generous, and liberating, left behind by us on earth.

## BOOK XII

### CHAPTER 2

DIGRESSIONS: English Literature – The withering away of the old schools –  
Historians – Poets – Publicists - Shakespeare

London, April to September 1822.

The novel, at the end of the last century, was included in the general condemnation. Richardson rested forgotten; his compatriots found traces in his style of the inferior society at the heart of which he had lived. Fielding held his own, Sterne, purveyor of originality, was *passé*. One still reads *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

If Richardson has no style (of which we are no judges, we foreigners), he will not live, since one only lives because of one's style. It is vain to rebel against this truth: the best composed work, adorned with fine likenesses, full of a thousand other perfections, is still-born if it lacks style. Style, and there are a thousand different ones, is not learnt; it is a gift of the gods, it is talent. But if Richardson has only been forgotten because of certain middle class mannerisms, unacceptable to elegant society, he can be revived; the Revolution which operates by dethroning the aristocracy and elevating the middle classes will render less obvious or eliminate the marks of inferior ways of living and speaking.

From *Clarissa* and *Tom Jones* derive the two principal branches of the genre of modern English novels, those novels picturing the family and domestic drama, and the novels of adventure showing society in general. After Richardson, the manners of the west of the city forced their way into the domain of fiction: novels were full of country houses, lords and ladies, scenes on the water, adventures on horseback, at the ball, the Opera, at Ranelagh, with *chit-chat*, a cackling that never ended. The scene swiftly transported itself to Italy; lovers crossed the Alps among terrifying dangers and agonies of soul enough to move lions: *the lion sheds tears!* was a phrase adopted in the best company.

Among those thousands of novels which have flooded England in the last half-century, two have retained their place: *Caleb Williams* and *The Monk*. I never saw Godwin during my exile in London; but I met Lewis twice. He was a very pleasant young Member of the Commons, who had the look and manner of a Frenchman. The works of Anne Radcliffe were a species apart. Those of Mrs. Barbauld, Miss Edgeworth, Miss Burney, etc., have, they say, a likelihood of survival. '*There ought to be laws,*' says Montaigne, '*against inept and useless scribblers, as there are against vagabonds and loafers. They should ban the use of people's hands, mine and a hundred others. Scribbling seems to be a kind of symptom of a hyper-active age.*'

But these diverse schools of sedentary novelists, of novelists who travel in stage-coach and carriage, of novelists of lake and mountain, ghosts and ruins, novelists of cities and salons, have recently been subsumed in the new school of Walter Scott, even as poetry has thrown itself at Lord Byron's feet.

The illustrious portrayer of Scotland began his literary career, during my London exile, with a translation of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*. He continued to make himself known through his poetry, while the

slant of his genius led him at last to the novel. He seems to me to have created an artificial genre; he has perverted both novel and history; novelists have begun creating historical novels and historians novelistic history. If, in Walter Scott, I am sometimes obliged to skip the interminable dialogue, that is unquestionably my fault; but one of the great merits of Walter Scott, in my eyes, is to be read by the whole world. It takes a greater effort of genius to create interest while maintaining order, than to please while exceeding all measure; it is less easy to rule the heart than to trouble it.

Burke pinned English politics to the past, Walter Scott took the English back to the Middle Ages; everything he wrote, made, built, was Gothic: books, furniture, houses, churches, mansions. But the lords of *Magna Carta* are today the *fashionables* of Bond Street; a frivolous race encamped in ancient stately homes, awaiting the arrival of future generations ready to drive them forth.



## BOOK XII

### CHAPTER 3

DIGRESSIONS: The new poetry – Beattie

London, April to September 1822.

At the same instant that the novel entered a Romantic state, poetry was subject to a like transformation. Cowper abandoned the French school in order to revive the national school; Burns, in Scotland, commenced the same revolution. After them came the restorers of the ballad form. Several of these poets of 1792 to 1800 belonged to the Lake School (the name has lasted), since these Romantics lived by the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and sometimes wrote of them.

Thomas Moore, Campbell, Rogers, Crabbe, Wordsworth, Southey, Hunt, Knowles, Lord Holland, Canning, Croker, still live to honor English letters; but one must be born English to wholly appreciate the merits of an intimate style of composition particularly to the taste of men of that country.

Nothing, in a living literature, is judged competent except works written in the native language. It is in vain to think you possess a foreign idiom in all its depth, you failed to imbibe it with your nurses' milk, those first words that she taught you at her breast, on your tongue; certain notes belong to their homeland. Among our forms of literature, English and German own to the strangest ideas: they delight in what we scorn, they scorn what we take delight in; they pay no attention to Racine, La Fontaine, nor Molière in his entirety. It makes one laugh to learn what they make of our great writers in London, Vienna, Berlin, St Petersburg, Munich, Leipzig, Göttingen, Cologne, to learn what they read there avidly, and what they do not read.

When an author's chief merit is his verbal style, a stranger will never fully comprehend his merit. The more intimate, individual, national a talent, the more its mysteries escape the mind that is not, so to speak, a compatriot of that talent. We admire the Greek and Romans by hearsay; our admiration comes to us by tradition, and the Greeks and Romans are not here to mock our Barbarian pronunciation. Who of us has any idea of the harmony of Demosthenes' prose, or Cicero's, of the cadence of Alcaeus' verse or Horace's, such as they were received by a Greek or Latin ear? It is said that true beauty is of all time, and every country: yes, beauties of feeling and thought; not the beauties of style. Style is not, like thought, cosmopolitan: it has a native soil, a sky, a sun of its own.

Burns, Mason, Cowper died during my exile in London, before and in 1800; they ended the century; I began one. Erasmus Darwin and Beattie died a couple of years after my return from exile.

Beattie had announced a new era of the lyre. *The Minstrel, or the Progress of Genius*, depicts the first effects of the Muse on a young bard, still ignorant of whose breath torments him. Now the future poet goes and sits by the sea-shore during a storm; now he leaves the village fair to listen, apart, to the sound of distant music.

Beattie has covered the entire series of daydreams and melancholy ideas of which a hundred other poets thought themselves *discoverers*. Beattie intended to continue his poem; in fact he wrote the second canto of it: Edwin hears a solemn voice lifted one evening from a valley's depths; it is that of a solitary who, having come to know the world's illusions, has buried himself in this retreat in order to win back his soul and sing the wonders of the Creator. This hermit instructs the young *minstrel* and reveals the secret of his genius to him. The idea was a happy one; the execution did not quite match the happiness of the idea. Beattie was destined to weep; the death of his son broke the father's heart; like Ossian after the loss of his son Oscar, he hung his harp from the branches of an oak-tree. Perhaps Beattie's son was that young minstrel that a father sang of and whom he no longer saw walking the mountain-side.

## BOOK XII

### CHAPTER 4

#### DIGRESSIONS: Lord Byron

London, April to September 1822.

There are striking resemblances to *The Minstrel* in Lord Byron's verse: at the time of my English exile, Lord Byron was not yet at Harrow School, in its village ten miles from London. He was a child, I was young and as unknown as he was: he had been raised among the Scottish heather, near the sea, as I was on the moors of Brittany, near the sea; he loved the Bible and Ossian, as I loved them; he sang the memories of childhood at Newstead Abbey as I sang them at the Château of Combours.

*'When I rove'd a young Highlander o'er the dark heath,  
And climb'd thy steep summit, oh Morven of snow!  
To gaze on the torrent that thunder'd beneath,  
Or the mist of the tempest that gather'd below...'*

In my journeys around London, when I was so destitute, I passed through Harrow village a score of times, without realizing what a genius it was destined to contain. I sat in the cemetery, at the foot of the elm on which, in 1807, Lord Byron wrote these lines, at the moment when I returned from Palestine:

*'Spot of my youth! whose hoary branches sigh,  
Swept by the breeze that fans thy cloudless sky; ...  
Where now alone I muse, who oft have trod,  
With those I loved, thy soft and verdant sod...  
When fate shall chill, at length, this fevered breast,  
And calm its cares and passions into rest...  
(Where)...here it lingered, here my heart might lie;  
Here might I sleep, where all my hopes arose,  
Blest by the tongues that charmed my youthful ear,  
Mourned by the few my soul acknowledged here;  
Deplored by those in early days allied,  
And unremembered by the world beside.'*

And I salute the ancient elm, at whose foot the young Byron gave himself to the caprices of youth, not long after I had dreamed of *René* in its shade, that same shade where later the Poet came to dream in turn of *Childe Harold*! Byron asked of that cemetery, witness of his first childhood games, an unknown grave: a vain prayer that fame denied him. However Byron's name is no longer what it has been; staying in Venice I heard of him on all sides: after a few years, in that same city where I had found it everywhere, I found it effaced and everywhere unknown. The echoes of the Lido no longer repeat it, and if you ask the Venetians they no longer know of whom you are speaking. Lord Byron is long dead as far as they are concerned; they no longer hear the neighing of his horse: it is the same in London, where his memory has faded. That is what becomes of us.

If I had passed through Harrow without knowing that the young Lord Byron would breathe there, the English passed Combours without suspecting that a little vagabond, climbing the trees, would leave any trace behind. The traveller Arthur Young, travelling through Combours, wrote:

*‘To Combours, the country has a savage aspect; husbandry not much further advanced, at least in skill, than among the Hurons, which appears incredible amidst inclosures; the people almost as wild as their country, and their town of Combours one of the most brutal filthy places that can be seen; mud houses, no windows, and a pavement so broken, as to impede all passengers, but ease none—yet here is a chateau, and inhabited; who is this Mons. de Chateaubriant, the owner, that has nerves strung for a residence amidst such filth and poverty? Below this hideous heap of wretchedness is a fine lake, surrounded by well wooded inclosures.’*

This Mons. de Chateaubriant was my brother; the retreat which seemed so hideous to the ill-tempered agriculturalist, was none the less a fair and noble domain, though solemn and sombre. As for me, what if Mr. Young had been able to see me there, a feeble ivy plant who began by climbing the foot of those savage towers, he who was only occupied with reviewing our harvest!

Allow me to add to these lines written in England in 1822, the following written in 1834 and 1840: they complete this fragment on Lord Byron; a fragment rounded off in particular by reading what I said about the great poet when passing through Venice.

There would perhaps have been some interest in the future in noting the meeting of two leaders of the new English and French schools, possessing the same fund of ideas, and destiny, though without much similarity in morals: one a peer of England, the other a peer of France, both travellers in the East, quite often not far apart, yet never meeting: only the life of the English poet was involved with less profound events than mine.

Lord Byron visited the ruins of Greece after me: in *Childe Harold* it is as though he embellishes my descriptions in *L’Itinéraire* with his own colors. At the start of my pilgrimage, I reproduced the Sire de Joinville’s *farewell* to his castle; Byron says a similar *farewell* to his Gothic mansion.

In *Les Martyrs*, Eudore leaves Messenia to return to Rome: ‘*Our voyage was a long one,*’ he says ‘*...we saw all those promontories marked by temples or tombs...My young companions had never heard tell of the metamorphoses of Jupiter, and they understood nothing of the remains before their eyes; I had already sat, like the prophet, among the ruins of desolate cities, and Babylon told me of Corinth.*’

The English poet, as the French prose writer, follows the letter from Sulpicius to Cicero; - so perfect an agreement is singularly glorious for me, since I anticipated the immortal bard on that shore of which we have similar memories, and where we commemorated the same ruins.

I have the honor of also being in tune with Lord Byron in our descriptions of Rome: *Les Martyrs* and my *Lettre sur la campagne romaine* have the inestimable advantage, to me, of having prefigured the inspirations of a fine talent.

Lord Byron's first translators, commentators and admirers were careful not to comment on the fact that several pages from my works may have stayed for a moment in the memory of the creator of *Childe Harold*; they would have considered that it took something from his genius. Now that the enthusiasm has abated a little, they are less prone to deny me that honor. Our immortal singer, in the last volume of his *Chansons*, has said: *'In one of the verses preceding this, I spoke of the lyricists that France owes to Monsieur de Chateaubriand. I have no fears that this verse will be refuted by the new poetic school, which, born beneath the eagle's wings, has with reason, often boasted of such an origin. The influence of the author of Le Génie du Christianisme has equally made itself felt abroad, and it would perhaps be just to recognize that the bard of Childe Harold is of the family of René.'*

In an excellent article on Lord Byron, Monsieur Villemain repeated Monsieur de Béranger's remark: *'Several incomparable pages of René,'* he said, *'have, in truth, fully exploited this poetic character. I do not know if Byron imitated them or recreated them out of his genius.'*

What I may chance to say of the affinities of imagination and destiny between the chronicler of *René* and the poet of *Childe Harold* plucks not a single hair from the head of the immortal bard. What could my Muse, pedestrian and without a lute, take from the Muse of the Dee, with wings and lyre? Lord Byron will live, regardless of whether as a child of his age like me, he has, like me and like Goethe before us, expressed its passion and tragedy; or whether my journey and the lantern of my French barque revealed a course to the English vessel through uncharted waters.

Moreover, two spirits analogous in nature may very easily conceive of like things, without bearing the reproach of having followed the same path in a servile manner. It is permissible to profit from ideas and images expressed in a foreign language, to enrich one's own: that has been observed in all ages and all times. I am the first to admit that in early youth, Ossian, Werther, Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaires, and Les Études de la nature, may well have contained ideas similar to mine; but I have hidden nothing, concealed nothing of the pleasure the works I delighted in gave me.

If it were true that *René* counted for something in the composition of unique characters presented under various names in *Childe Harold*, *the Corsair*, *Lara*, *Manfred*, and *The Giaour*; or if, by chance, Lord Byron had nourished my life with his, would he have been so weak as never to mention me? Was I then one of those contemporaries one disowns on achieving power? Could Lord Byron have been totally ignorant of me, he who cites almost all the French authors who were his contemporaries? Had he never heard tell of me, when the English journals, as the French ones, have echoed twenty years after his death with controversy over my work, when the *New Times* has drawn a parallel between the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme* and the author of *Childe Harold*?

There is no mind, however blessed, that fails to possess its sensitivities, its mistrust: one guards the scepter, one fears to share it, one is irritated by comparison. So, another superior talent omitted my name in her work *De la littérature*. Thank goodness that, valuing myself at my true worth, I have never pretended to an empire; since I only believe in religious truth of which freedom is an aspect, I have no more faith in myself than in anything else below. But I have never felt the need to be silent about what I admire; that is why I proclaim my enthusiasm for Madame de Staël and Lord Byron. What is sweeter than admiration? It derives from heavenly love, from tenderness elevated towards worship; one feels oneself

penetrated by gratitude for the divinity that extends the roots of our faculties, opens new vistas to the soul, grants us a happiness that is great, and pure, without fear or envy.

In addition, the little quibble I make in these *Memoirs*, over the greatest poet England has produced since Milton, only proves one thing: the high value I would have attached to being remembered by his muse.

Lord Byron has founded a deplorable school: I presume that he has been as sorry for giving birth to those *Childe Harolds*, as I am of the *René's* who daydream around me.

Lord Byron's life is the subject of many analyses and slanders: young men have taken his magical words too seriously; women have felt disposed to allow themselves to be seduced, fearfully, by that *monster*, in order to solace this solitary and unfortunate Satan. Who knows? Perhaps he has not met the woman he sought, a woman beautiful enough, a heart as vast as his own. Byron, according to fantastical opinion, is the ancient serpent, a seducer and a corrupter, since he sees the corruption of the human species; he is a fatal and suffering genius, situated between the mysteries of mind and matter, who sees no point in speaking of the enigma of the universe, who regards life as a dreadful irony without cause, like a perverse evil smile; he is the child of despair, who scorns and renounces, who bearing within himself an incurable wound, revenges himself by leading all whom he meets, through pleasure, to grief. He is a man who has never passed through an age of innocence, who has never had the advantage of being rejected and cursed by God; a man who, emerging as an outcast from nature's breast, is condemned to nothingness.

Such is the Byron of the fevered imagination: it bears no relation it seems to me to the reality.

As with most men, two different men are united in Lord Byron: the natural man and the social man. The poet, recognizing the role which the public wished him to play, accepted it and set himself to curse the world that at first he had merely daydreamed about: that progress is perceptible in the chronological order of his works.

As for his *genius*, far from having extended what was attributed to him, he has grown much narrower; his poetic thought is no more than a moan, a complaint, an imprecation; in that vein, however, it is admirable: one ought not to ask of his lyricism what it thinks, only what it sings.

As for his wit, he is sarcastic and various, but in a manner that perturbs and with a disastrous influence: the writer has read Voltaire deeply, and he imitates him.

Lord Byron, endowed with all the advantages, has little to complain of concerning his origins; the same accident of birth that made him wretched, and which saddled his superior powers with human infirmity, ought not to have tormented him, since it has not prevented him being loved. The immortal poet knows for himself the truth of Zeno's maxim: *'The voice is the flower of beauty.'*

One deplorable thing is the speed with which reputations flee these days. After a few years, what say I, after a few months, the craze vanishes; the denigration follows. Lord Byron's fame is already fading; his genius is better understood among us; the altars to him will burn longer in France than in England. Since *Childe Harold* excels principally in expressing particularly individualistic feelings, the English, who prefer feelings common to all, will end by lacking awareness of the poet whose cry is so melancholy and

profound. Let them take care: if they shatter the image of the man who has given them new life, what will be left them?

While I was writing, in 1822, during my London stay, these sentiments with regard to Lord Byron, he had only two years to live: he died in 1824, at the moment when disenchantment and disgust had begun to assail him. I preceded him into life; he has preceded me into death; he has been called before his time; my number was ahead of his, and yet he has departed first. *Childe Harold* has been forced to rest; the world could lose me without noticing my disappearance. I have met, in continuing my journey, Madame Guiccioli in Rome, and Lady Byron in Paris. Frailty and virtue were thus apparent to me: the former perhaps is too concerned with realities the latter has too few dreams.

## BOOK XII

### CHAPTER 5

England from Richmond to Greenwich – A trip with Peltier – Blenheim – Stowe – Hampton Court – Oxford – Eton College – Private life; political life – Fox – Pitt – Burke – George III

London, April to September 1822.

Now, after having spoken to you of English writers at the time when England served as my refuge, it only remains for me to say something of England itself at that period, its appearance, famous places, stately homes, and its private and political manners.

All of England can perhaps be appreciated in the space of twenty two miles, between Richmond, above London, and Greenwich below it.

Below London, lies industrial and commercial England, with its docks, warehouses, customs houses, arsenals, breweries, factories, foundries, and ships; the latter, at each tide, sail up the Thames in three groups, the smallest first, the middle-sized next, and lastly, the large vessels which shave with their sails the columns of the Royal Hospital and the windows of the tavern where visitors dine.

Above London, is agricultural and pastoral England with meadows, herds, country houses, and parks, whose lawns and shrubs the waters of the Thames, driven back by the rising tide, bathe twice a day. Between these two opposite points of Richmond and Greenwich, London merges together all of this double England: to the west aristocracy, to the east democracy, the Tower of London and Westminster, the boundaries between which the entire history of Great Britain has been enacted.

I spent part of the summer of 1799 at Richmond with Christian de Lamoignon, occupying myself with the *Génie du Christianisme*. I took boat trips on the Thames, or turns in Richmond Park. I would dearly have liked the London Richmond to be the Richmond of the treaty *Honor Richemundiae*, since then I would have found myself at home, and here is the reason: William the Bastard presented Alain, Duke de Bretagne, his son-in-law, with four hundred and forty-two areas of manorial land in England, which from then on formed the County of Richmond (see *the Domesday Book*): the Dukes of Brittany, Alain's successors enfeoffed these domains to Breton knights, cadet branches of the families of Rohan, Tinteniach, Chateaubriand, Goyon, and Montboucher. But despite my dearest wish I would have needed to seek in Yorkshire for that County of Richmond made into a Duchy under Charles II for his bastard son: Richmond on Thames is the ancient Shene of Edward III.

There Edward III died in 1377, that famous king robbed by Alice Perrers, his mistress, no longer the Alice or Catherine of Salisbury of the early days of the victor of Crécy's life: do not love except at an age when you can be loved. Henry VII and Elizabeth also died at Richmond: where can one not die? Henry VIII enjoyed it as a place of residence. English historians are deeply embarrassed by this abominable human being; on the one hand they cannot hide his tyranny and Parliament's subservience; on the other, if they speak out too much against the leader of the Reformation, they condemn themselves in condemning him:



*'The viler the oppressor, the more the slave is vile.'*

In Richmond Park they show you the hillock that served Henry VIII as an observation post while watching for the sign of Anne Boleyn's execution. Henry shivered with pleasure at the signal-rocket fired from the Tower of London. What delight! The axe had severed that delicate neck, bloodying the lovely hair in which the poet-king had twined his fatal caresses.

In a deserted Richmond Park, I did not await a signal indicating murder: I would not have wished even the smallest ill on anyone who might betray me. I walked there among a few peaceable deer: accustomed to run before a pack of hounds, they stopped when they were tired; they were brought back, very happy and quite content from this sport, in a cart filled with straw. I would go to see the kangaroos at Kew, ridiculous creatures, precisely the opposite of giraffes: those innocent quadrupeds stocked Australia more fittingly than the old Duke of Queensbury's whores did the alleys of Richmond. The Thames bordered the lawn of a cottage half-hidden beneath a cedar of Lebanon, among weeping willows: a newly married couple had arrived to spend their honeymoon in this paradise.

Now, as I was walking quietly one evening on the lawns of Twickenham, Peltier appeared, holding his handkerchief to his mouth: *'What an eternal cloud of fog!'* he cried as soon as he was capable of speaking. *'How the devil can you stay here? I have made a list: Stowe, Blenheim, Hampton Court, Oxford; with your dreamy way of going on, you will be here with John Bull in vitam aeternam, and see nothing.'*

I asked to be spared, in vain, I had to go. In the carriage, Peltier recounted his hopes to me; he employed relays; one dying under him, he would bestride another, and so on, leg by leg, to the end of his days. One of his hopes, the most solid, led him in the end to Napoleon whom he took by the throat: Napoleon had the foolishness to cross swords with him. Peltier had James Mackintosh as his defense lawyer; condemned by the Court, he made a fresh fortune (which he consumed incontinently) in selling the narrative of his trial.

Blenheim was disagreeable to me: I suffered all the more over my country's historic defeat, in that I had been forced to endure the insult of a recent affront: a boat upstream on the Thames spotted me on the shore; the rowers aware of a Frenchman began jeering; they had just heard the news of the naval action at Aboukir Bay: this foreign victory which might open the gates of France again, was nevertheless odious to me. Nelson, whom I had seen several times in Hyde Park, followed up his victories at Naples dressed in Lady Hamilton's shawl, while the *lazzaroni* (the homeless idlers of Naples) played at bowls with heads. The admiral died gloriously at Trafalgar, and his mistress miserably at Calais, having lost beauty, youth and fortune. And I whom the triumph at Aboukir offended so greatly on the banks on the Thames, I have seen the palm trees of Libya lining the shore of a sea calm and empty which was once reddened by the blood of my countrymen.

The park at Stowe is famous for its ornamental structures: I liked its shade more. The guide to the place showed us, in a dark valley, a copy of a temple whose model I would admire in the gleaming Valley of Cephissus. Fine paintings of the Italian School grieved in the depths of a few inhabited rooms, whose

shutters were closed: poor Raphael imprisoned in a mansion of the ancient Britons, far from the heaven of the Farnesina!

Hampton Court retained its collection of portraits of Charles II's mistresses: that's how this Prince conducted himself after escaping a Revolution that saw his father's head fall and which was forced to drive out his race.

We arrived at Slough, Herschel and his learned sister, and his great forty-foot telescope; he sought new planets: that made Peltier laugh who held fast to the seven ancient ones.

We stayed for two days in Oxford. I enjoyed being in that republic founded by Alfred the Great; it represented the privileged freedoms and manners of the literary institutions of the Middle Age. We explored the twenty colleges in depth, the libraries, the paintings, the museum, the botanical garden. Amongst the manuscript collection of Worcester College, I leafed through a life of the Black Prince, written in French verse by the Prince's Herald at Arms, with great delight.

Oxford, without resembling them, brought to mind the modest colleges of Dol, Rennes and Dinan. I had translated Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

*'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,'*

an imitation of these lines from Dante:

*'... squilla di lontano,  
Che paia il giorno pianger che si more.'*

Peltier hastened to publish my translation, to the sound of trumpets, in his journal. At the sight of Oxford, I recalled the same poets Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.

*'Ah, happy hills, ah, pleasing shade,  
Ah, fields beloved in vain,  
Where once my careless childhood strayed,  
A stranger yet to pain!  
I feel the gales, that from ye blow,  
A momentary bliss bestow,  
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,  
My weary soul they seem to soothe,  
And, redolent of joy and youth,  
To breathe a second spring.*

*Say, Father Thames....  
What idle progeny succeed  
To chase the rolling circle's speed,  
Or urge the flying ball?....  
Alas, regardless of their doom,*

*The little victims play!  
No sense have they of ills to come,  
Nor care beyond today.'*

Who has not experienced the feelings and regrets expressed here with all the sweetness of the Muse? Who has not been moved at memories of the games, studies, loves of former years? But can one bring them back to life? The delights of youth reproduced in memory are ruins seen by torchlight.

## THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE ENGLISH

Divorced from the Continent by a long war, the English, at the end of the last century, retained their national character and way of life. They were still one people, in whose name power was exercised by an aristocratic government; there were but two great classes friendly towards each other and bound by a common interest, the patrons and their dependents. That jealous class, called the *bourgeoisie* in France, which is beginning to appear in England, did not yet exist: nothing stood between the rich landowners and men occupied with their trade. Everything had not yet become the machinery of professional manufacture, the follies of the privileged order. On the same pavements where one now sees grimy faces and men in frock-coats, little girls in white cloaks passed by, their straw hats fastened under the chin with a ribbon, a basket containing fruit or books on their arm; all kept their eyes lowered, all blushed when one looked at them. Britain, says Shakespeare, is: '*in a great pool a swan's nest.*' Frock-coats without a jacket beneath were so unusual in London in 1793 that a woman, weeping bitterly over the death of Louis XVI, said to me: '*But, my dear sir is it true that the poor King was dressed in a frock-coat when they cut off his head?*'

The gentleman farmers had not yet sold their patrimony in order to live in London; in the House of Commons they still formed that independent faction which, supporting now the opposition now the government, maintained the ideals of liberty, order and propriety. They hunted foxes and shot pheasants in the autumn, ate fatted geese at Christmas, shouted *vivat* at roast beef, grumbled about the present, praised the past, cursed Pitt and the war, because it raised the price of port, and went to bed drunk to recommence the same life the next day. They were convinced that the glory of Great Britain would never fade as long as they sang *God save the King*, rotten boroughs were maintained, the game laws kept in force, and as long as they secretly sent hares and partridges to market under the titles of lions and ostriches.

The Anglican clergy was learned, hospitable and generous; it had welcomed the French clergy with truly Christian charity. Oxford University, at its own expense printed, and distributed freely among the *curés*, a New Testament according to the Latin Vulgate, with the imprint: in *usum cleri gallicani in Anglia exulantis*. As for English high society, as a poor exile I only saw it from the outside. When there was a reception at Court or at the Princess of Wales', ladies went by in sedan chairs sitting sideways; their great hoop-petticoats emerged from the door like altar hangings. They themselves, set on those waist-high altars, looked like madonnas or pagodas. Those fine ladies were the daughters whose mothers the Duc de Guiche and the Duc de Lauzun had once admired; those daughters are, in 1822, the mothers and grandmothers of the little girls who dance at my residence in short frocks to the music of Collinet's flute, a passing generation of flowers.

## POLITICAL LIFE

England in 1688, at the close of the last century, was at the peak of its glory. A poor *émigré* in London, from 1792 to 1800, I heard speeches by Pitt, Fox, Sheridan, Wilberforce, Grenville, Whitbread, Lauderdale and Erskine; today in 1822, as Ambassador to London in all my magnificence, I am not sure how it strikes me, since, instead of the great orators I admired previously, I see those rise to speak who were their followers at the time of my first visit, students in place of the masters. *Common* ideas have penetrated that individualistic society. But the enlightened aristocracy, placed in charge of the country for a hundred and forty years, will have displayed to the world one of the finest and greatest social orders which has done honor to the human species since the Roman Patriciate. Perhaps, some old family, in the depths of the country, will recognize the society I happen to describe, and will regret the passing of those times whose loss I here deplore.

In 1792, Mr. Burke split from Mr. Fox. The breach concerned the French Revolution which Mr. Burke attacked, and Mr. Fox supported. Never had the two orators, who until then had been friends, deployed such eloquence. The whole Chamber was moved, and tears filled Mr. Fox's eyes, when Mr. Burke ended his reply with these words: *'The Right Honorable gentleman, in the speech he has made, has treated me in every phrase with uncommon harshness; he has censured my entire life, my conduct and my opinions. Notwithstanding this great and serious attack, unmerited on my part, I will not be intimidated; I do not fear to declare my sentiments in this Chamber nor anywhere else. I say to the whole world that the Constitution is in peril. It is indiscreet at any period, but especially at my time of life, to provoke enemies, or give my friends occasion to desert me. Yet if my firm and steady adherence to the British Constitution place me in such a dilemma, I am ready to risk it, and, as public need and public prudence demand, with my last words to exclaim: "Fly from the French Constitution!"'*

Mr. Fox having said that it was not a question of loss of friends, Mr. Burke cried: *'Yes, there is a loss of friends! I know the price of my conduct. I have done my duty at the price of my friend. Our friendship is at an end. I warn the Right Honorable gentlemen, who are the greatest rivals in this Chamber, that they must in future (whether they move in the political hemisphere like two great meteors, or whether they march together like brothers), I warn them that they must cherish and preserve the British Constitution, that they must guard it against innovation and save it from the danger of these new theories.'* A memorable age of the world.

Mr. Burke, whom I met at the end of his life, overwhelmed by the death of his only son, founded a school dedicated to the children of impoverished *émigrés*. I went to see what he called his nursery. He was delighted with the liveliness of this foreign race that passed beneath his paternal genius. Watching the little exiles leaping heedlessly, he said to me: *'Our boys could not do that'* and his eyes filled with tears: he was thinking of his son who had gone to a longer exile.

Pitt, Fox, Burke are no more, and the English *Constitution* has suddenly acquired the influence of those new theories. One has to have listened to the seriousness of the parliamentary debates of that era, to have heard those orators whose prophetic voices seemed to announce an imminent revolution, to gain an idea of the scene that I recall. *Liberty*, contained within the limits of order, seemed at Westminster to struggle against the influence of *anarchic liberty*, which spoke to the gallery still bloody from the Convention.

Mr. Pitt, tall and thin, had a mournful mocking air. His speech was cold, his delivery monotonous, and his gestures lifeless; yet, the lucidity and fluency of his thought, the logic of his reasoning, suddenly illumined by flashes of eloquence, rendered his talents something out of the ordinary.

I saw Mr. Pitt quite frequently, as he crossed Saint James's Park on foot from his residence to visit the king. George III, for his part, would arrive from Windsor, having drunk beer from a pewter pot with the neighboring farmers; he would cross the ugly courtyards of his ugly citadel, in a grey carriage followed by several Horse Guards; he was the master of the kings of Europe, as five or six City merchants are the masters of India. Mr. Pitt, dressed in black, a sword with a steel hilt at his side, his hat under his arm, climbed in taking two or three of the steps at a time. On his journey he only met with three or four idle *émigrés*: casting a disdainful glance towards us, he passed by, nose in air, pale of face.

That great financier kept no order at home; no fixed hours for meals or sleep. Crippled with debt, he paid nothing, and could not bear to commit the sum to paper. A valet ran his house. Badly dressed, without pleasures, or passions, only eager for power, he despised honors, and wished to be no more than William Pitt.

Lord Liverpool, in the month of June of this year 1822, took me to dine at his country house: crossing Putney Heath, he showed me the little house where the son of Lord Chatham died in debt, the statesman who had had Europe in his pay and distributed all the earth's billions with his own hands.

George III survived Mr. Pitt, but lost his reason and his sight. Each session, at the opening of Parliament, the Ministers read quietly in their chambers awaiting the bulletin regarding the king's health. One day, I went to visit Windsor: for a few shillings I obtained the good will of a doorman who concealed me so as to see the king. The monarch, blind and white-haired, appeared, like King Lear, wandering his palace, groping his way along the walls. He sat down at a piano whose location he was familiar with, and played several bars of a sonata by Handel: a fine end to Old England!

## BOOK XII

### CHAPTER 6

The Émigrés return to France – The Prussian Minister grants me a false passport under the name of Lassagne, a resident of Neuchâtel, in Switzerland – The end of my career as a soldier and traveller – I land at Calais

London, April to September 1822.

I began to turn my eyes towards my native land. A great Revolution had occurred. Bonaparte, having become First Consul, was re-establishing order by despotism; many exiles were returning; the noble *émigrés*, in particular, were hurrying to gather in the remainder of their wealth: loyalty faded at the head, while its heart still beat in the breasts of a few half-clothed provincial gentlemen. Mrs. Lindsay had departed; she wrote to Auguste and Christian de Lamoignon telling them to return; she also extended an invitation to Madame d'Aguesseau, their sister, to cross to France. Fontanes summoned me, to complete the printing of *Le Génie du Christianisme* in Paris. Though full of memories of my country, I felt no desire to see it again; gods more powerful than the paternal Lares held me back; I no longer had possessions or sanctuary in France; my motherland had become a bosom of stone to me, a breast without milk: I would not find my mother, brother or sister Julie there. Lucile was still alive, but she had married Monsieur de Caud, and no longer bore my name; my young widow had known me through a union of only a few months, through misfortune and an eight-year absence.

Left to myself, I do not know if I would have had the strength to leave; but I saw my small circle breaking up; Madame d'Aguesseau offered to take me to Paris: I allowed myself to go. The Prussian Minister procured a passport for me, under the name of Lassagne, a resident of Neuchâtel; Dulau and Co ceased printing *Le Génie du Christianisme*, and gave me the sheets that had been composed. I separated the sketches of *Atala* and *René* from *Les Natchez*; I placed the rest of the manuscript in a trunk and entrusted its transit to my hosts in London, and I set out en route for Dover with Madame d'Aguesseau: Madame Lindsay waited for us at Calais.

Thus I left England in 1800; my heart was otherwise engaged than it is at the time of writing, in 1822. I brought nothing back from the land of exile but regrets and dreams; today, my head is full of displays of ambition, politics, and Court splendors, so ill-suited to my nature. What events pile up in my present existence! Go on, gentlemen, go on; my turn will come. I have merely unrolled a third of my life before your eyes; if the trials I endured weighed on my springtime serenity, now, entering a more fruitful time, the germ of *René* will develop, though bitterness of a different kind will be blended with my narrative! What will I not have to tell you, in speaking of my country, of her revolutions, of which I have already shown you the initial outline; of that Empire and the colossus whose fall I saw; of that Restoration in which I played so large a part, glorious as it is today in 1822, but which nevertheless I see only through a kind of fateful mist?

Here, I end this twelfth book, which has brought me to the spring of 1800. Arriving at the end of my first career, the career of a writer opens before me; from a private man I am about to become a public man; I am leaving the silent virginal sanctuary of solitude to enter the noisy, dusty cross-roads of the world;

broad daylight will illuminate my life of dreams, light will penetrate the kingdom of shadows. I cast a tender glance over these books which enclose my unremembered hours; I seem to be saying a last goodbye to my paternal home; I take leave of the thoughts and chimeras of my youth as of sisters, as of sweethearts I am leaving by the family hearth, never to see them again.

We took four hours to cross from Dover to Calais. I slipped into my country protected by a foreign name: doubly hidden beneath the obscurity of the Swiss, Lassagne, and my own, I entered France with the century.

**End of Book XII**

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 1

My stay in Dieppe – Two societies

Dieppe, 1836 (Revised in December 1846)

You know that I have changed my place of residence many times during the writing of these *Memoirs*; that I often describe these places, having spoken of the feelings they inspired in me, and retrace my memories, so as to merge the history of my thoughts and my various homes with the story of my life.

You will discover where I am now. Walking this morning on the cliffs, behind Dieppe castle, I noticed the postern which communicates with the cliffs by means of a bridge flung over a moat: Madame de Longueville fled across it to reach Queen Anne of Austria; taking ship at Le Havre, landing at Rotterdam, she returned to Stenay, and the Marshal de Turenne. The great captain's laurels were no longer unstained, and she, the scornful exile, no longer treated the guilty party with much consideration.

Madame de Longueville, who enhanced the Hotel Rambouillet, the throne of Versailles, and the municipality of Paris, acquired a passion for the author of the Maxims, and was faithful to him for as long as she could be. He in turn thought less of his *pensées* than of his friendship with Madame de La Fayette and Madame de Sévigné, the verse of La Fontaine and the love of Madame de Longueville: such is the power of illustrious attachments.

The Princesse de Condé, near to death, said to Madame de Brienne: *'My dear friend, tell that poor wretch, at Stenay, the state you see me in, and to learn how to die.'* Fine words; but the Princess forgot that she herself had been loved by Henri IV, and that escorted from Brussels by her husband she had wished to rejoin the Béarnais, *to escape at night, through the window, and then ride twenty or thirty leagues on horseback*; she was then a *poor wretch* of seventeen.

Descending the cliffs, I found myself on the main Paris road; it climbed quickly on leaving Dieppe. On the right, on the ascending line of a bank, a cemetery wall rose; alongside this wall was fixed a wheel for winding rope. Two rope-makers, walking backwards in parallel and putting their weight on each leg in turn, sang together quietly. I listened; they had reached these lines of Le Vieux Caporal: that fine poetic falsity, which has brought us where we are.

*'Who is gazing and weeping there?  
Ah! It's the drummer's widow,' etc.*

The men sang the refrain: *Conscripts, fall in; don't weep...march in step, in step...* in so sad and manly a tone that tears sprang to my eyes. In marking the steps themselves, while winding the hemp, they looked as though they were shadowing the last movements of the old lance-corporal: I would not have been able to say what part of this fineness, revealed solely by two sailors in sight of the sea singing the death of a soldier, was due to Béranger.

The cliff had called up for me monarchist grandeur, the road plebeian celebrity; I compared in my mind people at either extreme of society; I asked myself to which of those two eras I would have preferred to



belong. When the present has disappeared like the past, which of those two names will most attract the gaze of posterity?

Moreover, if facts are everything, if, in history, the value of a name does not outweigh the value of an event, what is the difference between my times and the times which unrolled from the death of Henri IV to that of Mazarin! What are the troubles of 1648 compared to that Revolution, which has consumed the previous world, of which perhaps it will die, by leaving neither an old nor a new society behind it? Have I not depicted in my *Memoirs* scenes of vastly greater importance than those revealed by the Duc de Rochefoucauld? Even at Dieppe, what is that cool and voluptuous idol of Paris, seductive and rebellious, beside Madame la Duchesse de Berry? The cannon fire that announced the royal widow's presence here, no longer sounds; the tribute of smoke and powder has left nothing behind on the shore but the moaning of the waves.

Those two Bourbon daughters, Anne-Geneviève and Marie-Caroline, are gone; the two sailors and the song of the plebeian poet are engulfed; Dieppe is emptied of me; it was another *I*, and *I* of my lost early years, who once lived in these places, and that *I* is dead, since our days die before us. Here you have seen a second-lieutenant in the Navarre Regiment, exercising recruits on the shingle; you have seen me exiled under Bonaparte; you will meet me when July days find me here once more. Here I am still; I take up my pen again to continue my Confessions.

In order to recognize where we are up to, it is useful to cast a glance at the progress of my *Memoirs*.

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 2

The stage my Memoirs have reached

What has happened with me is what happens with all who undertake a work on a grand scale: I have, first of all, set up a flag at both ends then, planting and replanting my scaffolding here and there, I have raised the stones and cement of intervening constructions; it takes several centuries to create a Gothic cathedral. If Heaven allows me to live, the monument will be completed throughout my life, the architect, ever the same, will only vary in his age. For the rest, it is painful to keep the intellectual self intact, imprisoned in a worn material envelope. Saint Augustine feeling his body weakening, said to God: *'Be the tabernacle of my soul'*; and he said to men: *'When you find me in this book....pray for me.'*

Thirty-six years have elapsed between the events which formed the first part of my Memoirs, and those which I am involved in today. How to recommence with ardor the narration of subjects once filled for me with passion and warmth, when the people are no longer alive with whom I can discuss them, when it is a question of waking frozen effigies from the depths of Eternity, of descending into a burial vault to play at life there? Am I not myself already half-dead? Have not my opinions altered? Can I see things from the same viewpoint? Those personal events which so troubled me, the prodigious public events which accompanied or followed them, have they not diminished in importance in the world's eyes, as in my own? Whoever has a long life feels his days grow colder; he finds that tomorrow no longer bears the interest it did of old. When I search my thoughts, there are names, and people almost, who escape my memory, however much they may have made my heart beat: the vanity of man, forgetting and forgotten! It is not enough to say to our dreams, our loves: *'Renew!'* for them to do so; one cannot enter the realm of shadows without *The Golden Bough*, and it needs a young man's strength to pluck it.

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 3

The year 1800 – The scene in France – I arrive in Paris

Dieppe, 1836

*Someone, of the ancestral house, is here. (Rabelais)*

For eight years, exiled in Great Britain, I had seen only an English world, so different, particularly then, to the rest of the European world.

As the Dover *packet* neared Calais, in the spring of 1800, my gaze was on shore before me. I was struck by the impoverished air of my country: hardly any masts rose from the harbor; a crowd in short jackets (*en carmagnole*) and cotton caps strode in front of us along the jetty: the conquerors of a continent were announced to me by the sound of clogs. When we drew alongside the pier, the police and customs men leaped onto the bridge, to check our luggage and passports: in France, a man is always suspect, and the first thing one is aware of in public matters, as in our pleasures, is a three cornered hat or a bayonet.

Mrs. Lindsay was waiting for us at the inn; next day we left for Paris with her: Madame Aguesseau, a young relative of hers, and I.

On the road, one saw hardly any men; women bronzed and blackened, worked the fields, their feet naked, their heads bare, or covered by a handkerchief: one would have taken them for slaves. I was bound to be somewhat amazed by the independence and vigor of this land where women handled the hoe while men handled the musket. One would have said that a fire had passed through the villages; they were in a wretched state and half-demolished: all was dust and mud, smoke and debris.

To right and left of the road, ruined country houses appeared; of their razed plantations, only a few felled trunks remained, on which children played. One could see shattered boundary walls, abandoned churches, from which the dead had been driven, bell-towers without bells, cemeteries without crosses, headless saints stoned in their niches. Daubed on the walls, and already old, was the Republican inscription: *LIBERTY, EQUALITY*, and *FRATERNITY OR DEATH*. Sometimes there had been an attempt to erase the word *DEATH*, but the red or black letters still appeared under a layer of whitewash. The nation, which seemed on the point of dissolution, was entering a new world, like those peoples fleeing the darkness of barbarity and destruction in the Middle Ages.

Approaching the capital, between Écouen and Paris, the elms had not been cut down; I was struck by those beautiful tree-lined avenues, unknown on English soil. France was as new to me as once the forests of America had been. Saint-Denis was exposed, its windows shattered; rain penetrated its grassy naves, and there were no longer any tombs; I have since seen the bones of Louis XVI there, the Cossacks, the Duc de Berry's coffin, and the catafalque of Louis XVIII.

Auguste de Lamoignon came to meet Mrs. Lindsay: his elegant carriage contrasted with the heavy carts, and dirty stagecoaches, dilapidated and drawn by broken-down nags hitched to them with ropes, that I had encountered since Calais. Mrs. Lindsay lived at Ternes. They set me down in the Chemin de la Revolté

and I crossed the fields to reach my hostess's home. I stayed at her house for twenty-four hours; there I met a certain tall fat Monsieur Lasalle who arranged *émigré* matters for her. She warned Monsieur de Fontanes of my arrival; at the end of forty-eight hours, he came to find me in the depths of a little room which Mrs. Lindsay had rented for me in an inn almost at her door.

It was a Sunday: towards three in the afternoon, we entered Paris on foot through the Barrière de l'Étoile. We have no idea today of the impression that the excesses of the Revolution made on the minds of Europe, and principally among men absent from France during the Terror; it seemed to me, that I was literally landing in Hell. I had been witness, it is true, to the start of the Revolution; but the greatest crimes had not then been committed, and I was bowed down by subsequent events, such of them as were recounted in a peaceful and well-ordered English society.

Appearing under a false name, and convinced that I was compromising my friend Fontanes, on entering the Champs-Élysées I was amazed to hear the sounds of violins, horns, clarinets and drums. I saw dance-halls where men and women were dancing; further on, the Tuileries palace appeared at the far end of its two great stands of chestnut trees. As for the Place Louis XV, it was bare; it had the ruined look, melancholy and deserted, of an ancient amphitheater; I passed it swiftly; I was quite surprised not to hear any groans; I was fearful of putting my foot in a pool of blood of which there was not a trace; my eyes were drawn to that corner of sky where the instrument of death had towered; I thought I could see my brother and sister-in-law in their shifts lying beneath the blood-drenched machine: there Louis XVI's head fell. Despite the joyful streets, the church towers were silent; it felt as though I was returning on that day of immense grief, Good Friday.

Monsieur de Fontanes lived in the Rue Saint-Honoré, near Saint-Roch. He led me to his house, presented me to his wife, and then conducted me to the house of a friend, Monsieur Joubert, where I found temporary shelter: I was received like a traveller of whom word had been given.

Next day I went to the prefecture, and under the name of Lassagne handed over my foreign passport, receiving in exchange, to cover my stay in Paris, a permit renewable from month to month. After a few days, I rented a mezzanine in the Rue de Lille, near the Rue Saints-Pères.

I had brought with me the manuscript of *Le Génie de Christianisme* and the first pages of that work, printed in London. I was sent to Monsieur Migneret, a worthy man, who agreed to re-commence the interrupted printing and to forward me an advance to live on. Not a soul knew of my *Essai sur les Révolutions*, despite what Monsieur Lemierre had told me. I dug out the old philosopher Deslisle de Sales, who was about to publish his *Mémoire en faveur de Dieu*, and I returned to Ginguené's house. He was lodged in the Rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain, near the Hôtel du Bon La Fontaine. On the concierge's lodge was a sign: *Here we respect the title of citizen, and address each other as (thou). Keep the door closed, please.* I went up: Monsieur Ginguené, who scarcely recognized me, spoke to me from the heights of grandeur of all that he was and had been. I retired humbly, and did not attempt to renew so incompatible a relationship.

Always, in the depths of my heart, I nourished regrets for, and memories of, England; I had lived in that country for so long that I had grown accustomed to it: I could not get used to the filthiness of our houses, and our stairs, our dirtiness, our noise, our familiarity, our indiscreet gossip: I was English in manners,

taste, and, up to a point, in thought; for if, as is claimed, Lord Byron was sometimes inspired by *René* while writing *Childe Harold*, it is also true to say that eight years residence in Great Britain, preceded by a voyage to America, and a prolonged acquaintance with speaking, writing, and even thinking in English, had necessarily influenced the direction and expression of my ideas. But little by little I tasted that sociability that distinguishes us, that delightful interaction between intelligent men, rapid and easy, that absence of all arrogance and prejudice, that indifference to fortune and name, that natural levelling of the classes, that equality of spirit that makes French society is unique and makes amends for our faults: after a few months living among us, one feels one can only live in Paris.

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 4

The year 1800 – My life in Paris

Paris, 1837

I shut myself in my mezzanine and gave myself up completely to work. In my moments of relaxation, I made exploratory trips in various directions. In the middle of the Palais-Royal, the Cirque (an immense oblong building) was being constructed; Camille Desmoulins no longer orated outdoors; the crowds of prostitutes, those virginal companions of the goddess Reason, no longer circulated, led by David their wardrobe-master and Corybants. At the exit from each street, among the arcades, one met tradesmen crying their curious wares, *shadow puppets, optical glasses, science exhibitions, curious creatures*; despite the mound of heads, there were still idlers. From the depths of the cellars of the Palais-Marchand came bursts of music, accompanied by the rattle of drums: perhaps it was there that those giants I sought lived who must necessarily have produced such vast events. I descended; a subterranean ball was in progress in the midst of seated spectators drinking beer. A little hunchback, planted on a table, played a violin and sang a hymn to Bonaparte, which ended with these lines:

*For his virtues, for his merits,  
He deserves to be their father!*

One handed him a sou after the refrain. Such was the nature of that human society that once supported Alexander and now supported Napoleon.

I visited the places where I had walked, and daydreamed, in my early youth. In the former monasteries the members of the clubs had been driven out to join the monks. Wandering behind the Luxembourg, I was led to visit the Charterhouse; it had been completely demolished.

The Place des Victoires, and that of the Vendôme wept for their missing statues of the great King; the Community of Capuchins had been pillaged: the cloister within served as a setting for Robertson's Phantasmagoria. At the Cordeliers, I sought in vain for the Gothic nave where I had seen Marat and Danton in their prime. On the Quai des Théatins, the church of those monks had become a café and a theatre for tightrope walkers. In the doorway, an illuminated sign depicted the artists, and large letters read: Free show. I dived with the throng into this treacherous lair: I was no sooner in my seat when waiters entered, napkin in hand, shouting like fanatics: 'Drinks, gentlemen! Drinks!' I did not wait to hear twice, and escaped in a sorry manner to the mocking laughter of the gathering, because I had not had anything to drink.

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 5

#### A change in society

The Revolution was divided into three phases with nothing in common between them: the Republic, the Empire, and the Restoration; three diverse worlds, each of them as completely finished as the other two, and appearing as if separated by centuries. Each of these three worlds had a guiding principle: that of the Republic was equality; that of the Empire force, that of the Restoration liberty. The Republican era was the most original and the most deeply etched, since it is unique in history: never had there been seen, never again will there be seen, physical order produced by moral disorder, unity emerge from government by the masses, the scaffold substituted for law and served in the name of humanity.

In 1801, I witnessed a second social transformation. The confusion involved was bizarre: by agreeing to wear disguises, a crowd of people became characters they were not: each had their *nom de guerre* or pseudonym hung round their neck, like the Venetians, in the Carnival, carrying in their hand a little mask to warn that they were masked. One was deemed to be Italian or Spanish, another Prussian or Dutch; I was Swiss. Mothers passed for their son's aunt, fathers for their daughter's uncle; a landowner was only his steward. This movement reminded me, in an opposite sense, of that of 1789, when monks and nuns left their cloisters and the old society was invaded by the new: the latter having replaced the former, was in turn replaced itself.

However an orderly world began to emerge once more; people left the streets and cafes to go home; they gathered together their remaining family; they reconstituted their inheritance and in collecting the debris, just as after a war, they beat the recall and took stock of what they had lost. The churches which were left undamaged re-opened: I had the happiness of sounding the trumpet at the gate of the Temple. One could distinguish the old retreating Republican generations, from the advancing Imperial generations. The generals produced by the draft, poor, badly spoken, of severe demeanor, who, from all their campaigns, had only brought back wounds and tattered uniforms, passed officers of the Consular army glittering with gold braid. The returning *émigré* chatted calmly with those who had murdered some of his close relatives. All the doormen, great supporters of the late Monsieur Robespierre, now regretted the spectacles in the Place Louis XV, where they cut off the heads of *women who*, as my own concierge in the Rue de Lille told me, *had white necks like the flesh of chickens*. The *Septembrists*, having changed name and district, had become sellers of cooking apples on street corners; but they were often required to move on, because people, recognizing them, knocked their stalls down and tried to beat them. The revolutionaries who had enriched themselves began to occupy the grand houses for sale in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In the process of becoming barons and counts, the Jacobins spoke only of the horrors of 1793, of the necessity of punishing the proletariat and suppressing the excesses of the populace. Bonaparte, appointing Brutus and Scaevola to his police force, prepared to dye their ribbons, sully their titles, force them to betray their beliefs and denounce their crimes. Among them jostled a vigorous generation conceived in blood and nurtured only to spill that of foreigners; day by day the metamorphoses of Republicans into Imperialists, and the tyranny of the many into the despotism of the one, were being accomplished.

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 6

My life in 1801 – Le Mercure – Atala

Paris, 1837 (Revised, December 1846)

While I was occupied with removing, adding and altering the pages of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, necessity obliged me to work on other things. Monsieur de Fontanes was at that time writing for *Le Mercure de France*: he proposed I should also write for that paper. Such exercises were not without peril: politics was only visible through literature, and Bonaparte's police read every word. One odd circumstance, in keeping me from sleeping, lengthened my waking hours, and gave me more time. I had bought some turtledoves; they cooed eternally: at night I shut them, in vain, in my travelling trunk; they only cooed the more. In one of the moments of insomnia they provoked, I thought to write a letter for Le Mercure, addressed to *Madame de Staël*. This sally suddenly caused me to quit the darkness; what my two thick volumes on Les Révolutions had failed to do for me was achieved by a few pages in a newspaper. My head emerged a little from the shadows.

This first success seemed to presage that which followed. I was busy revising the proofs of *Atala* (an episode included, like *René*, in *Le Génie du Christianisme*) when I realized that some pages were missing. Fear gripped me: I thought that someone had stolen part of my story, which was a wholly baseless anxiety, since no one thought my work worth the effort of stealing from. Be that as it may, I determined to publish *Atala* separately, and I announced my intention in a letter sent to the *Journal des Débats* and *Le Publiciste*.

Before taking the risk of revealing the work to the light of day, I showed it to Monsieur Fontanes: he had already read parts of it in London in manuscript. When he reached *Père Aubry's* speech, by *Atala's* deathbed, he said sharply in a harsh tone: *'That's not it; that's poor; rework it!'* I withdrew hurt; I felt incapable of improving it. I wanted to hurl the whole thing into the flames; I spent the hours from eight till eleven in the evening, in my room, sitting at my table, my forehead resting on the back of my hands which lay open on my papers. I was angry with Fontanes; I was angry with myself; I did not even attempt to write, I despaired of my ability so deeply. Towards midnight, the sound of my turtledoves registered with me, softened, and rendered more plaintive, by the prison I had confined them in: inspiration returned; I quickly re-drafted the missionary's speech, without a single gap, without scratching out a single word, just as it remained and exists today. With beating heart, I took it to Fontanes that morning, who cried: *'That's it! That's it! I said you could do better!'*

My fame in this world dates from the publication of *Atala*: I ceased to live for myself alone, and began my public career. After so many military triumphs, a literary triumph seemed a wonder; people were starved. The novelty of the work added to the public interest. *Atala* appearing in the midst of the Empire's literature, that school of classicism, a rejuvenated old-age the first glance at which created boredom, was a kind of production of an unknown type. They were unsure as to whether to class it among the *monstrosities* or among the *beauties*; was she a Gorgon or a Venus? The assembled academicians gave learned dissertations on her sex and her nature, just as they made their reports concerning *Le Génie du Christianisme*. The old era rejected it, the new welcomed it.



*Atala* became so popular that, in company with the Marquise de Brinvilliers, she went to swell Curtius' waxworks collection. The carters' taverns were decked with engravings in red, green and blue representing Chactas, Father Aubry, and the daughter of Simaghan. In the wooden booths, on the *quais*, they displayed my characters modelled in wax, as images of the Virgin and the saints are displayed at fairs. I saw my savage lady in a street theatre plumed with a cockerel's feathers, speaking of the *soul of solitude* to a savage of her tribe, in a manner such as to make me sweat with embarrassment. At the *Varieties* they performed a piece in which a young boy and girl, leaving their lodgings, travelled by stagecoach to marry in their little village; on arrival they spoke of nothing but alligators, egrets and forests, their parents believing they had gone mad. Parodies, caricatures, lampoons showered on me. The Abbé Morellet, to confound me, made his servant girl sit on his knees to prove he was unable to hold that young virgin's feet in his hands, as *Chactas* had held *Atala's* feet during the storm: if this *Chactas* of the *Rue Anjou* were to have had himself painted like that I would have forgiven him his criticism.

All this added to the hullabaloo surrounding my appearance. I became fashionable. My head was turned: I was unacquainted with the pleasures of self-importance, and I became drunk. I loved fame as one does a woman, like a first love. Nevertheless coward that I was my terror equaled my passion: a conscript, I behaved badly under fire. My natural barbarity, the doubt I had always harbored concerning my talent, made me humble in the midst of my triumph. I hid from my own splendor; I walked in splendor, searching for the means to extinguish the halo with which my head was crowned. In the evenings, my hat pulled down over my eyes, for fear lest someone might recognize the great man, I went to the tavern to read surreptitiously the praise given to me in some little known newspaper. Together with my fame, I extended my peregrinations as far as the steam-driven pumping plant at Chaillot, on the same road where I had suffered so much when travelling to Court; I was no more at ease with my new honors. When *My Excellency* dined for thirty *sous* in the Latin Quarter, his food went down the wrong way, disturbed by the gazes of which he was the object. I contemplated myself, I said: '*It's only you, this extraordinary creature, that eats like any other man!*' On the Champs-Élysées there was a café I was fond of, because of the nightingales in a cage suspended from the wall of the back room; Madame Rousseau, the proprietress of the place, knew me by sight without knowing who I was. About ten in the evening she would bring me a cup of coffee, and I would find *Atala* in *Les Petites-Affiches*, to the sound of my half-dozen Philomelas. Alas! I was soon to hear of Madame Rousseau's death; our flock of nightingales and the Indian girl who sang: *Sweet habit of loving, so needed for living*, lasted only a moment!

If success was unable to maintain that stupid passion of vanity in me for long, nor pervert my reason, it held dangers of another kind; those dangers increased with the appearance of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, and my resignation over the death of the Duc d'Enghien. Then there came pressing around me, as well as the young girls who weep at novels, a crowd of Christians, and those other noble enthusiasts whose hearts beat faster at an honorable action. The *ephebes* of thirteen or fourteen years, were the most perilous; since knowing neither what they want nor what they want of you, they confuse your image, seductively, with one made of stories, ribbons and flowers. Jean-Jacques Rousseau speaks of the declarations he received on publication of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and the conquests it offered him: I have no idea whether it would have delivered empires to me, thus, but I know that I was buried under a pile of perfumed letters; if those letters were not today those of grandmothers, I would be hard put to it to recount with fitting modesty how they competed for a word from my pen, how they gathered up some envelope I had written, and how, blushing, they would hide it, lowering their heads, beneath the veil that fell from their flowing hair. If I was not spoiled, it must be because my character is robust.

Out of real politeness or inquisitive weakness, I sometimes allowed myself to go as far as feeling myself obliged to thank the unknown ladies who sent me their names with their flatteries: one day, climbing to a fourth storey I found a delightful creature, under her mother's wing, whose home I never set foot in again. A Polonaise invited me into silk-lined rooms; a mixture of odalisque (eastern concubine) and Valkyrie, she had the look of a snowdrop with its white petals, or one of those elegant heath-flowers that replace the other daughters of *Flora*, when the latter's season is not yet arrived, or has gone by: that feminine choir, varying in age and beauty, was a realization of my former *sylph*. The combined effect on my vanity and my feelings might have been all the more serious in that till then, except for one serious attachment, I had not been sought after nor distinguished from the crowd. However I must say: though it might have been easy to take advantage of passing illusion, the idea of an amorous adventure via the chaste path of Religion was an affront to my integrity: to be loved on account of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, loved for *The Extreme Unction*, for *The Dance of Death*! I could never have played so shameful a hypocrite.

I knew a provincial medical man, Doctor Vigaroux; having arrived at the age where every pleasure takes a day from our life, he said '*he had no regret for time lost in such a way; without worrying if he conferred the happiness which he received, he travelled towards death which he hoped to make his last delight.*' Nevertheless I was witness to his sorry tears when he died; he could not hide his misery from me; he had left things too late; his white hairs did not dangle low enough to catch and absorb his tears. There is no real unhappiness in leaving this earth except in unbelief: for the man without faith, existence possesses something of the dread with which it senses nothingness; if one had not been born, one could not experience the horror of no longer existing: life for the atheist is a fearsome flash of lightning that only serves to reveal the abyss.

God of generosity and mercy! You have not placed us on earth for worthless sorrows and wretched happiness! Our inevitable disenchantment tells us that our destiny is more sublime. Whatever our faults may have been, if we have retained a steadfast spirit and thought of you amidst our frailties, we will be raised, when your goodness delivers us, to that realm where all bonds are eternal.

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 7

My life in 1801 – Madame de Beaumont: her set

Paris, 1837

I did not have to wait long for punishment of my vanity as an author, of the most unpleasant kind, though not the most foolish: I had thought to savor *in petto* the satisfaction of being a sublime genius, not by wearing, as now, a beard and a strange costume, but distinguished merely by my superiority while still dressing like other honest men; vain hope! My pride was due its reward; correction arrived via the politicians I was obliged to know: celebrity is a gift paid for by the soul.

Monsieur de Fontanes was a friend of Madame Bacciochi; he presented me to this sister of Bonaparte, and soon to the First Consul's brother, Lucien. The latter had a country house near Senlis (Plessis-Chamant), where I was forced to go and dine; the château had belonged to the Cardinal de Bernis. In the garden there was the tomb of Lucien's first wife, a lady half German and half Spanish, and the memory of the poet-Cardinal. The nymph feeding a stream, its bed dug out with a spade, was a she-mule who drew the water from a well: that was the source of all those rivers Bonaparte caused to flow through his Empire. Efforts were made to obtain my erasure from the list of *émigrés*; already I was called and was calling myself *Chateaubriand* in public, forgetting that I ought still to be called *Lassagne*. The *émigrés* returned, among others Messieurs de Bonald and de Chênedollé. Christian de Lamoignon, my friend in exile in London, took me to Madame Récamier's house: the curtain between her and I was suddenly parted.

The person who occupied the greatest place in my existence on my return from the Emigration was Madame la Comtesse de Beaumont. She lived for part of the year at the Château de Passy, near Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, which Monsieur Joubert occupied during the summer. Madame de Beaumont returned to Paris and wished to meet me.

In order to make of my life one long chain of regrets, Providence decreed that the first person to treat me with kindness at the start of my public career was also the first to vanish. Madame de Beaumont heads the funeral procession of those women who have died before me. My most distant memories rest among ashes, and they have continued falling from coffin to coffin; like the Indian Pandit, I recite the prayers for the dead, until the flowers of my rosary have faded.

Madame de Beaumont was the daughter of Armand-Marc de Saint-Hérem, Comte de Montmorin, French Ambassador in Madrid, Commandant of Brittany, a member of the Assembly of Notables in 1787, and entrusted with the portfolio of Foreign Affairs under Louis XVI, who was very fond of him: he died on the scaffold to which he was later followed by several members of his family.

Madame de Beaumont, with a poor rather than a fine figure, strongly resembled the portrait of her by Madame Lebrun. Her face was thin and pale; her almond-shaped eyes would perhaps have been too bright if an extraordinary sweetness had not half-quenched her glances, making them glow languidly, as a ray of light is dimmed by passing through clear water. Her character had a sort of stiffness and impatience which was due to the strength of her feelings, and the inward suffering she experienced. An elevated soul, of great courage, she was born for the world from which her spirit had withdrawn through unhappiness,

and by choice; but when a friendly voice summoned up that lonely intellect, it emerged and spoke to you heavenly words. Madame de Beaumont's extreme weakness made her slow of expression, and that slowness was touching; I only knew this sadly afflicted woman at the time of her flight; she was already mortally ill, and I devoted myself to her sufferings. I had taken lodgings in the Rue Saint-Honoré, at the Hôtel d'Étampes, near the Rue Neuve-du-Luxembourg (Rue Cambon). Madame de Beaumont occupied an apartment in the latter street, with a view of the gardens belonging to the Justice Ministry. I went to see her each evening with her friends and mine, Monsieur Joubert, Monsieur de Fontanes, Monsieur de Bonald, Monsieur Molé, Monsieur Pasquier, and Monsieur Chênédollé, men who have played a role in literature and public affairs.

Full of odd habits and originality Monsieur Joubert will be eternally missed by those who knew him. He exerted an extraordinary hold on the mind and heart, and when he captured you, his image was there like an event, like an obsession that one could not rid oneself of. His great pretension was to calm, yet no one was as troubled as he was: he was on the alert to stifle those emotions of the spirit that he thought harmful to his health, and his friends were always disrupting the precautions he had taken to remain well, since he could not stop himself being moved by their sadness or their joy: he was an egotist who only cared about others. In order to gather his forces, he considered himself obliged to close his eyes and not speak for hours at a time. God alone knows what sounds and turbulence occurred within him during the silence and calm he prescribed for himself. Monsieur Joubert altered his diet and regime from one moment to the next, living on milk one day, and mincemeat the next, jogging at a rapid pace on the roughest of roads, or dawdling with tiny steps along the best laid avenues. When he was reading he would tear out the pages he disliked, possessing, as a result, a personal library composed of eviscerated works, enclosed by overlarge covers.

A profound metaphysician, his philosophy, by a process of elaboration peculiar to himself, became art or poetry: a Plato with the heart of a La Fontaine, he was taken with an ideal of perfection that prevented his achieving anything. In the manuscripts discovered after his death, he wrote: *'I am like an Aeolian harp, which produces sweet sounds but plays no tune.'* Madame Victorine de Chastenay claimed that he had the air of a soul which had encountered a body by chance, and managed it as best it could: a statement both delightful and true.

We laughed at enemies of Monsieur de Fontanes, who took him for a deep and subtle politician: he was quite simply an irascible poet, direct to the point of fury, a spirit whom contrariness drove to extremes, and one who could no more hide his opinions than accept those of anyone else. His friend Joubert's literary principles were not his: the former found something good everywhere and in all writings; Fontanes, on the other hand, was horrified by some or another doctrine, and could not bear to hear the names of certain authors pronounced. He was the sworn enemy of the principles of modern composition: to display material events to the reader's eyes, the workings of crime or the gibbet with its rope, to him seemed enormities; he claimed one should never behold an object except in a poetic setting, as if within a crystal globe. Grief played out mechanically in front of one's eyes seemed to him mere sensationalism, like the Circus or the Place de Grève; he could not comprehend tragic feeling that ennobles through awe, and changes, through art, into a sweet pity. I cited the Greek vase paintings to him: in the arabesques decorating those vases, one sees the body of Hector dragged behind Achilles' chariot, while a tiny figure, suspended in the air, represents the shade of Patroclus, consoled by this vengeance enacted by Thetis' son. 'Well, Joubert' Fontanes would cry, *'what do you say to this metamorphosis of*

*nakedness? How those Greeks could portray the soul!*' Joubert would consider himself under attack, and would get Fontanes to contradict himself, while reprimanding him for his indulgence towards me. These arguments, often extremely comical, were never ending: one evening, at half past eleven, when I was living in the Place Louis XV, in the top story of Madame de Coislin's house, Fontanes climbed the eighty-four steps to vent his fury, rapping the floor with the tip of his cane, to finish an argument he had left incomplete: it was a question of Picard, whom he set, at that moment, well above Molière; he would have taken great care to avoid writing down a single word of what he said: Fontanes speaking and Fontanes with pen in hand were two different men.

It was Monsieur Fontanes, I love to relate, who encouraged my first attempts; it was he who heralded *Le Génie du Christianisme*; it was his muse that, full of wondering devotion, directed mine to the new paths into which it was hastened; he taught me how to hide the deformities in things by the manner in which they were lit; to place, as much as it as in me to do so, classical language in the mouths of my Romantic characters. There were once men who were the guardians of taste, like those dragons that guarded the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides; they only allowed youth to enter when it could touch the fruit without spoiling it.

My friend's writings set one on a happy course; the spirit experiences well-being and finds itself in a harmonious environment where everything charms and nothing harms. Monsieur de Fontanes revised his works ceaselessly; no one was more convinced, than this master of a former age, of the excellence of the maxim: 'Hasten, slowly.' What would he say of the present day, both morally and materially, where they attempt to dig up the road and yet never consider themselves to be travelling quickly enough? Monsieur de Fontanes preferred to travel as the delightful measure took him. You have read what I wrote of him when I met him again in London; the regrets I expressed then, I must repeat here: life obliges us to weep endlessly, in anticipation or in remembrance.

Monsieur de Bonald had a nimble mind: one might have taken his ingenuity for genius; he had dreamed up his metaphysical politics in Condé's army, in the Black Forest, like those professors at Jena and Göttingen who have since marched at the head of their students and were killed for the cause of German liberty. An innovator, though he had been a musketeer under Louis XVI, he regarded his seniors as children when it came to politics and literature; and he claimed, employing for the first time that self-conceit of present-day language, that the Vice-Chancellor of the University was *not yet advanced enough to understand all that*.

Chênédollé, possessing knowledge and talent, acquired rather than natural, was so gloomy he was nicknamed the Raven; he prowled around my works. We had made a treaty: I had abandoned my skies, mists and clouds to him; but he agreed to leave me my breezes, waves and forests.

I am only speaking here of my literary friends; as for my political ones, I am not sure if I should speak to you of them: their principles and speeches have dug deep pits between us!

Madame Hocquart and Madame de Vintimille gathered to the Rue Neuve-du-Luxembourg. Madame de Vintimille, a woman of an earlier age, the like of which few remain, frequented society and reported to us what occurred there; I asked her if they were *still founding cities*. The description of petty scandals sketched with vivid mockery, without being offensive, made us appreciate the value of our own cautiousness more. Madame de Vintimille and her sister had been celebrated in verse by Monsieur La

Harpe. Her language was circumspect, her character restrained, her wit borrowed: she might have known Mesdames de Chevreuse, de Longueville, de La Vallière, and de Maintenon, or Madame Geoffrin and Madame du Deffand. She mixed easily in a society where pleasure was taken in the difference between minds, and in the combination of their various worth.

Madame Hocquart was dearly loved by Madame de Beaumont's brother, whose thoughts were full of her even on the scaffold, just as Aubiac went to the gallows kissing a piece of blue velvet sleeve left to him through Marguerite de Valois' kindness. From now on, nowhere were gathered under one roof so many distinguished people differing in social position and possessing different destinies, able to speak of the most ordinary or the most elevated things; a simplicity of speech due not to incapacity but choice. It was perhaps the last social venue where the old style French wit was displayed. One no longer finds that urbanity among young French people, the fruit of education transformed by habitual usage into an aspect of character. What happened to that society? Make your plans then, collect your friends, in order to prepare yourself for an eternity of grief! Madame de Beaumont is no more, Joubert is no more, Chênédollé is no more; Madame de Vintimille is no more. Once, during the grape harvest, I visited Monsieur Joubert at Villeneuve: I walked with him on the banks of the Yonne; he picked mushrooms in the copses, I gathered autumn crocuses in the meadows. We talked about everything and especially our friend Madame de Beaumont, lost forever: we summoned up the memory of our former hopes. That evening, we returned to Villeneuve, that town encircled by crumbling walls from the age of Philippe-Auguste and half-ruined towers, above which rose the smoke from the wine-growers' hearths. Joubert showed me, far-off on a hill, a sandy path through the woods which he took when he went to see his neighbor, concealed in her château of Passy during the Terror.

Since the death of my dear host, I have travelled that region of Sens four or five times. I gazed at the hills from the high road: Joubert no longer walked there; I saw again the woods, fields, vineyards, the little heaps of stone where we used to take a rest. Passing through Villeneuve, I glanced at my friend's deserted street and shuttered house. The last time it occurred, I was on my way to the Embassy in Rome: ah, if he had been there, I would have carried him off to the grave of Madame de Beaumont! It had pleased God to reveal a heavenly Rome to Monsieur Joubert, still better suited to his Platonic soul, converted to Christianity. I will see him no longer down here: *I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me.*

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 8

The year 1801 – Summer at Savigny

Paris, 1837

The success of *Atala* having persuaded me to continue *Le Génie du Christianisme*, two volumes of which were already in print, *Madame de Beaumont* offered me a room in the country in a house she had just rented, at *Savigny*. I spent six months in this retreat of hers, with *Monsieur Joubert* and other friends.

The house was situated at the entrance to the village, on the Paris side, near an old highway known there as the *Chemin de Henri IV*; it had its back to a vine-covered slope, and its face to Savigny Park, which ended in a screen of trees, and was crossed by the little River Orge. On the left, the Plain of Viry stretched away as far as the springs of Juvisy. All round this countryside, were valleys, which we visited in the evenings in search of fresh walks.

In the mornings, we breakfasted together; after breakfast, I retired to my work; Madame de Beaumont had the goodness to copy out sections which I indicated to her. This noble woman offered me shelter when I had none: without the peace she granted me, perhaps I would never have finished a work I had been unable to complete during my times of hardship.

I will remember forever certain evenings spent in this friendly refuge; returning from our walks, we would gather together by a clear-water pond, in the middle of a lawn in the kitchen garden; Madame Joubert, Madame de Beaumont and I, would sit on a bench; Madame Joubert's *son* rolled on the grass at our feet; that child has already vanished. Monsieur Joubert walked by himself down a gravel path; two guard dogs and a cat played round us, while pigeons cooed in the eaves. What happiness for a man newly returned from exile, after spending eight years in profound isolation, except for a few days swiftly flown! It was usually on such evenings that my friends made me tell them about my travels; I have never described the wildernesses of the New World as well as then. At night, when the windows of our country salon were open, Madame de Beaumont would point out various constellations, saying one day I would remember her teaching me to recognize them; since I have lost her, I have, several times, not far from her grave in Rome, searched for those stars she named, in the firmament; I have seen them gleaming above the Sabine Hills; the rays of light projected from those stars struck the Tiber's surface in their fall. The place from which I saw them above the woods of Savigny, and the places where I saw them once more; my unsettled fate; the sign left behind in the sky by a woman, one by which I was to remember her, all this broke my heart. By what miracle does man consent to do what he does on this earth, he who must die?

One evening, we saw someone climb surreptitiously through one window and leave by another; it was *Monsieur Laborie*; he was fleeing from Bonaparte's clutches. Shortly afterwards there appeared one of those souls in pain who are of a different species to other souls, and who merge, in passing, their obscure unhappiness with the vulgar sufferings of the human species: it was *Lucile*, my sister.

After my arrival in France, I had written to my family to tell them of my return. Madame la Comtesse de *Marigny*, my elder sister, first to seek me, mistook the street, and met with five *Monsieur Lassagnes*, the last of whom emerged from a cobbler's trap-door to answer to his name. *Madame*

de Chateaubriand arrived in turn: she was delightful, and filled with all the qualities fitted to grant me the happiness I have found with her, since we have been reunited. Madame la Comtesse de Caud, Lucile, presented herself next. Monsieur Joubert and Madame de Beaumont conceived a passionate fondness and tender pity for her. A correspondence began then between them, which only ended with the death of the two women who inclined to each other like two flowers of a similar nature on the point of fading away. Madame Lucile, having stopped at Versailles, on the 30th of September 1801, I received this note from her: *'I write to beg you to thank Madame de Beaumont for me, for the invitation to Savigny she sends me. I hope to have that pleasure of visiting, in about a fortnight's time, as long as there is no impediment on Madame de Beaumont's side.'* Madame de Caud came to Savigny as she had promised.

I have told you how, in my youth, my sister, a canoness of the Chapter of Argentière, and destined for that of Remiremont, had conceived an attachment for Monsieur de Malfilâtre, a counsellor at the High Court of Brittany, an attachment which, locked in her breast, had added to her innate melancholy. During the Revolution, she married Monsieur le Comte de Caud, and lost him after fifteen months of marriage. The death of Madame la Comtesse de Farcy, a sister whom she loved tenderly, increased Madame de Caud's sadness. She then attached herself to my wife, Madame de Chateaubriand; and gained an ascendancy over her which became tiresome, since Lucile was forceful, imperious, unreasonable, and Madame de Chateaubriand, subject to her whims, in order to render her the services which a wealthier friend may to a sensitive and less fortunate one, hid those services from her.

Lucile's genius and her deep nature had almost brought her to Rousseau's state of madness; she thought she was exposed to secret enemies: she gave Madame de Beaumont, Monsieur Joubert, and myself, false addresses at which we might write to her, she examined the seals of her letters, looking to ensure that they had not been broken; she wandered from house to house, unable to stay with my sisters or my wife; she had conceived an antipathy for them, and Madame de Chateaubriand, after having been devoted to her beyond anything one might conceive, had finally been overwhelmed by the burden of so cruel an attachment.

Another fatality struck Lucile: Monsieur de Chênedollé, living near Vire, had gone to see her at Fougères; soon there was question of a marriage, which fell through. Everything eluded my sister at once, and left to herself she had not the strength to endure it. This plaintive spectre sat for a moment on a stone, in the smiling solitude of Savigny: so many hearts had welcomed her there with joy! They would have been more than happy to restore her to the sweet realities of existence! But Lucile's heart could only beat in an atmosphere made expressly for herself, which no one else had ever breathed. She consumed the days swiftly in that isolated world in which heaven had placed her. Why had God created a being destined only to suffer? What mysterious connection can there be between a tormented nature and an eternal principle?

My sister had not altered; she had only taken on the fixed expression produced by her ills: her head was a little bowed, like one on whom the hours have weighed. She reminded me of my parents; those first family memories, summoned by the grave, surrounded me like moths rushing to burn themselves at night in the dying flames of a funeral pyre. In contemplating her, I thought I saw all my childhood in Lucile, gazing at me a little lost from behind her eyes.

The vision of grief had vanished: this woman, burdened with life, seemed to have come seeking the other dispirited woman whom she was obliged to carry away.



## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 9

The year 1802 – Talma

Paris, 1837

The summer passed: according to custom, I promised to repeat it again the following year; but the clock-hand never returns to the hour one would wish it to revisit. During the winter in Paris, I made several new acquaintances. Monsieur Julien, wealthy, obliging, a cheerful guest, though from a family where they kill themselves, had a box at the Théâtre Français; he lent it to Madame de Beaumont; I went to see the show on four or five occasions with Monsieur de Fontanes and Monsieur Joubert. When I entered society, the old comedy was in full swing; I met with it again when it was in a state of complete decay; tragedy was still going strong, thanks to Mademoiselle Duchesnois and above all to Talma, who had achieved the peak of his dramatic talent. I had seen him on his debut; he was not as handsome and in a manner of speaking, not as young as he was when I saw him again: he had acquired distinction, nobility and gravitas with the years.

The portrait Madame de Staël has painted of Talma in her work on Germany is only half true: the brilliant writer perceived the great actor with a woman's imagination, and endowed him with a quality he lacked.

Talma had no use for the Middle Ages: he understood nothing of the *gentleman*; he did not know of our ancient society; he had not sat at the ladies' table, in a Gothic tower in the depths of the woods; he was ignorant of the pliability, the sensitivity of taste, the gallantry, the swift movement of manners, the simplicity, the tenderness, the heroic sense of honor, the Christian devotion of chivalry: he was no Tancred, or Coucy, or at least, he transformed them into heroes of a Middle Ages of his own creation: *Othello* was at the root of his Vendôme.

What was Talma, then? His age and classical times were both his. He had deep and intense passions, inspired by love and by his country; they exploded from his breast. He possessed the fatal inspiration, the genius for disorder, of that Revolution through which he had passed. The terrible scenes, that had surrounded him, echoed, in his art, with the distant and mournful tones of Sophocles' and Euripides' *choruses*. His mode of acting which was not the accepted mode, gripped you like an illness. Black ambition, remorse, jealousy, the soul's melancholy, physical pain, madness and conflict among the gods, human grief: that is what he understood. His mere entry during a scene, the mere sound of his voice, was powerfully tragic. His brow showed suffering and thought, which were alive in his immobility, his stance, his gestures, his paces. A *Greek*, he arrived, gloomy and panting from the ruins of Argos, an immortal Orestes, tormented as he had been for three thousand years by the Eumenides; A *Frenchman*, he came from the solitudes of Saint-Denis, where the Parcae of 1793 had cut the thread of the kings' sepulchral existence. Utterly sad, waiting for something unknown but decreed by an unjust heaven, he stepped forward, driven by destiny, inexorably bound, between fatality and terror.

That time cast an inevitable shadow over ageing dramatic masterpieces; its gloom could change the clearest Raphael into a Rembrandt; without Talma a major part of the wonders of Corneille and Racine would have remained unknown. Dramatic skill is a fiery torch; it communicates its flames to other partially-lit torches and makes those dramatists of genius live again to delight you with their re-born splendor.

To Talma we owe the perfection of the actor's costume. But is theatrical truth and authenticity of dress as necessary to the art as one might suppose? Racine's characters gain nothing from the cut of their cloth: in the paintings of the masters the backgrounds are poorly done and the clothes inexact. Orestes' *Rages* or Joad's *Prophecy*, played in a salon by Talma in morning dress, have just as much effect as if they are declaimed on the stage by Talma in a Greek cloak or a Hebrew robe. Iphigenia was dressed like Madame de Sévigné, when Boileau addressed these fine lines to his friend:

*'Never did Iphigenia, at Aulis, sacrificed,  
Cost the throng of Greeks more tearful cries,  
Than La Champmeslé shed, in her guise,  
In this great drama played before our eyes.'*

This fidelity in representing the inanimate object embodies the spirit of the arts of our times: it heralds the decadence of high poetry and true drama; we content ourselves with minor beauties when we are powerless to create great ones; we imitate armchairs and velvet upholstery, to deceive the eye, when we can no longer draw the features of the man seated in that armchair, on that upholstery. Moreover, once we have stooped to this exactness of material form, we find ourselves forced to replicate it; since the public, materialists themselves, demand it.

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 10

The years 1802 and 1803 – *Le Génie du Christianisme* – Disaster predicted –  
The reason for ultimate success

Meanwhile I completed *Le Génie du Christianisme*: Lucien asked to see various proof sheets; I sent them to him; he added some commonplace notes in the margins.

Although the success of my large work was as brilliant as that of little *Atala*, it nevertheless provoked more opposition: it was a serious work in which I was no longer attacking the principles of classical literature and philosophy by means of a novel, but by reason and faith. The empire of Voltaire gave the alarm, and rushed to arm itself. Madame de Staël was mistaken about the prospect for my religious writings: they brought her the work uncut; she riffled her fingers through the pages, stopped at the chapter on Virginity, and said to Monsieur Adrien de Montmorency, who happened to be with her: ‘*Oh! My goodness! Our poor Chateaubriand! This will fall flat on its face!*’ The Abbé de Boulogne, having had access to parts of my work before submitting them to print, replied to a bookseller who consulted him: ‘*If you wish to ruin yourself, publish it.*’ Yet the Abbé de Boulogne has since pronounced an overly magnificent eulogy regarding my book.

Everything, in fact, seemed to predict disaster for me: what hope could I have, I without a name and without patrons, of countering the influence of Voltaire, dominant for more than half a century, of Voltaire, who had raised the enormous edifice completed by the *Encyclopedists* and consolidated by all the distinguished men of Europe? What! Were Diderot, D’Alembert, Duclos, Dupuis, Helvétius, Condorcet spirits without authority? What! Must the world return to the *Golden Legend*, renounce its admiration acquired through the master-works of science and reason? Could I win a cause that Rome in its wrath, the clergy with all its power, could not protect: a cause defended in vain by the Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, supported by Parliamentary decrees, by armed force and in the King’s name? Was it not as ridiculous as rash for an obscure individual to oppose a philosophical movement so overwhelming that it produced the Revolution? It was a curiosity to see a pygmy *flexing his little arms* to stifle a century’s progress, arrest a civilization, and set the human race moving backwards! By God’s grace, it would only take a word to crush this madman: for Monsieur Ginguéné, savaging *Le Génie du Christianisme*, declared in *La Décade*, that the criticism came too late, since my repetitious harping was already forgotten. He said this, five or six months after the publication of a work that the assault of the whole French Academy, on the occasion of the Decennial Prize, could not kill.

It was amongst the ruins of our temples that I published *Le Génie du Christianisme*. The faithful believed themselves rescued: there was a need then for faith, avidity for religious consolation arising from the long years during which those consolations were denied. What supernatural powers were needed to overcome so many adversities suffered! How many shattered families were forced to search for their lost children in the bosom of the Father of Mankind! How many broken hearts, how many isolated souls, called for a divine hand to heal them! They ran to the house of God as one hurries to the doctor’s house during a plague. The victims of our troubles (and what an array of victims) hastened to the altar; suffering shipwreck they clung to the rock on which they sought salvation.

Bonaparte, desiring at that time to establish his power on the deepest foundations of society, came to an arrangement with the See of Rome: initially he placed no obstacle in the way of a work that increased the popularity of his intentions; he had to struggle with those surrounding him, and against the declared enemies of religion; he was happy then to be defended from without by the opinions which *Le Génie du Christianisme* expressed. Later, he repented of his error: traditional ideas of monarchy entered with these religious ideas.

One episode from *Le Génie du Christianisme*, which made less noise than *Atala*, fixed a typical character from modern literature; however, if *René* did not already exist, I would no longer choose to write it; if it were possible for me to destroy it, I would destroy it. A whole hive of *René* poets and *René* prose-writers has swarmed: one hears nothing but appalling, disjointed phrases; it has seemed nothing but winds and storms, unspecified ills delivered over to clouds and the night. There is not a single puppy leaving college who has not dreamed himself the most unfortunate of men; not a stripling of sixteen who is not tired of life, who does not think himself tormented by genius; who, in the depths of his thoughts, is not given to *waves of passion*; who has not clasped his pale, tousled forehead, who has not amazed astonished men with an illness whose name he knows no more than they.

In *René*, I exposed the sickness of my era; but it was a different folly of the novelists to render affliction present beyond everything else. The common feelings which are the foundation of humanity, paternal and maternal affection, filial piety, friendship, love, are inexhaustible; but unique modes of feeling, individualities of character and spirit cannot be broadened and multiplied in vast and numerous tapestries. The little undiscovered corners of the human heart are a narrow field; there is nothing left to gather from that field after the first hand has reaped there. A malady of the soul is not a permanent or natural state: one cannot reproduce it, to create a literature, by taking advantage of universal feeling continually modified at the hands of artists who mold it to shape its form.

Be that as it may, literature was dyed with the colors of my religious painting, as public affairs have retained the phraseology of my writings on the city; *La Monarchie selon la Charte*, has been the basis of our representative government, and my article for the *Conservateur*, on moral interests and material interests endowed politics with those two designations.

Writers did me the honor of imitating *Atala* and *René*, just as the pulpit followed my tales of Missions and Christian good works. The passages in which I demonstrate that in driving out the pagan gods of the woods, our religion broadened so as to return nature to solitude; the paragraphs where I handle the influence of our religion on our ways of seeing and depicting, where I examine the changes which occurred in poetry and oratory; the chapters that I dedicated to research into the alien feelings introduced into dramatic roles in antiquity, contained the seeds of the new criticism. *Racine's* characters, as I said, are and are *not* Greek characters, they are Christian characters: that had not been at all understood.

If the effect of *Le Génie du Christianisme* had been no more than a reaction against the doctrines to which were attributed our revolutionary ills that effect would have ceased when its cause vanished; it would not have lasted until this moment in which I write. But the effect of *Le Génie du Christianisme* on opinion was not limited to a momentary resurrection of religion, as if pretended to on the point of death: a more lasting metamorphosis occurred. If there was stylistic innovation in the work, there was also a change of doctrine; the foundations were altered like the form; atheism and materialism were no longer the basis for belief or unbelief in young minds; the idea of God and the immortality of the soul reclaimed their empire:

from then on, there was an alteration in that chain of ideas which linked one with another. One was not nailed in place by antireligious prejudice; one was no longer obliged to remain a mummy of non-existence, wound round by philosophical bindings; one allowed oneself to examine each system however absurd one might find it to be, even were it a Christian one.

Besides the faithful who returned to the voice of their Pastor, other faithful were formed *a priori*, by this right of free examination. Establish God as a principle, and the Word follows: the Son is born inevitably of the Father.

The various abstract schemes only serve to substitute more incomprehensible mysteries for the Christian ones: pantheism, which moreover takes two or three different forms, and which it is today's fashion to ascribe to enlightened intellects, is the most absurd of Eastern daydreams, brought back to light by Spinoza; regarding this subject it suffices to read the article by a skeptical Bayle on Amsterdam's Jewish philosopher. The peremptory tone with which some people speak about all this appalls one, unless it is due to lack of study: they are struck by words they cannot understand, and imagine them to be those of transcendental genius. How easy it is to believe that Abelard, Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas Aquinas brought to metaphysics an intellectual superiority which we cannot match; that the systems of Saint-Simon, Fourier's Phalansterianism, and *Humanism* had been discovered and practiced already by sundry heretics: that what are held up to us as products of progress, as new discoveries, are the outdated concepts trailed for fifteen centuries through the schools of Greece and the colleges of the Middle Ages. The trouble is that the first sectarians were unable to found their Neo-Platonist republic, such as Gallienus consented to Plotinus attempting in Campania: so, much later, we encounter the crime of burning sectarians for wishing to establish communal possessions, and declaring prostitution holy, asserting that a woman could not, without sin, refuse a man who demanded casual union with her in Jesus Christ's name: to arrive at this union, they claimed, it was only necessary to relinquish the soul, and allow it to rest for a moment in God's breast.

The spiritual shock that *Le Génie du Christianisme* gave, thrust the eighteenth-century out of its rut, and pushed it once and for all onto a new track: people began once more, or rather for the first time, to study the sources of Christianity: on re-reading *the Fathers* (assuming they had ever read them in the first place) they were struck by a plethora of interesting facts, scientific philosophy, beauties of style in every genre, ideas, which, by a more or less obvious gradation, created the transition from ancient society to modern society: a unique and memorable era of humanity, when heaven communicated with earth through the souls of men of genius.

In the past, beside the crumbling world of paganism, another world was created, as if outside society, a spectator of those great spectacles, poor, secluded, solitary, not mixing in life's affairs except when its teachings or help were needed. It is a marvelous thing to behold those first bishops, almost all honored by the name of saint or martyr, those simple priests watching over their relics and catacombs, those monks and hermits in their monasteries and grottos, creating their rule of peace, morality and charity, when all was war, corruption and barbarity: journeying to the tyrants of Rome and from them to the leaders of the Tartars and the Goths, in order to prevent the injustices of the former and the cruelties of the latter, halting armies with a wooden cross and the word of peace: the weakest of men, yet defending the world against Attila; set between two universes in order to connect them, in order to solace the last moments of a dying society and support the first steps of a society fresh from its cradle.

## BOOK XIII

### CHAPTER 11

#### Le Génie du Christianisme, continued – The faults of the work

It was impossible for the ideas developed in *Le Génie du Christianisme* not to contribute to an alteration in ideas. It is still that work which present taste turns to in order to discover the edifices of the Middle Ages: it is I who woke the new century to an admiration for the ancient temples. If my view has been carried too far; if it is untrue that our cathedrals match the beauty of the Parthenon; if it is false that those churches teach us forgotten facts in documents of stone; if it is foolish to maintain that those granite memoirs reveal to us things which escaped the Benedictine savants; if by dint of repetition of the Gothic everyone is dying of boredom, it is not my fault. As for the rest, in relation to the arts, I know what is lacking in *Le Génie du Christianisme*; that section of my work is defective, because in 1800 I did not understand the arts: I had not seen Italy, Greece, or Egypt. Similarly, I had not taken sufficient account of the lives of the saints and the legends; yet they offered me wonderful stories: selecting from them with taste, one could have reaped an abundant harvest. This rich field of the imagination of the Middle Ages surpassed in fecundity Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Milesian fables. There are, moreover, false or facile judgements in my work, such as those I held concerning Dante, to whom I have since rendered shining homage.

Among my more serious works, I completed the task of *Le Génie du Christianisme* in my *Études historiques*, one of my works less talked of and less stolen from.

The success of *Atala* delighted me, because my spirit was still fresh; that of *Le Génie du Christianisme* was tiresome to me: I was obliged to give my time to useless correspondence and compliments from abroad. Admiration, so-called, did not compensate me for the disgust that seizes a man whose name the crowd has retained. What benefit can offset the peace you have lost by allowing the public to invade your privacy? Add to that the difficulties that the Muses delight in inflicting on those who follow their cult, the embarrassment of an easy-going character, the inability to deal with good fortune, time-wasting, unstable moods, lively affections, sadness for no reason, joy without cause: who would wish, if he were in charge, to purchase on these conditions, the uncertain advantages of a reputation that one is not sure of achieving, which will be challenged during one's lifetime, which posterity will fail to confirm, and from which your death will render you forever remote?

The literary controversy regarding novelties of style which *Atala* generated was renewed on publication of *Le Génie du Christianisme*.

A characteristic trait of the Imperial school, and even the Republican school, is to observe: while society advanced, for good or ill, literature remained stationary; a stranger to the change in ideas, it failed to be involved in its times. In comedy, the lords of the manor, Colin, Babet, or the intrigues of those salons that are no longer known, were played (as I have already remarked) in front of rough and blood-stained men, destroyers of those manners whose portrait was displayed to them; in tragedy the plebeian stalls were entranced by the families of nobles and kings.

Two things held literature frozen in the eighteenth century; the impiety that Voltaire and the Revolution had brought to it, the despotism with which Bonaparte controlled it. The Chief of State found it

advantageous to subordinate literature which he had confined to barracks, where it presented arms, and emerged when he cried: '*On parade!*'; marched in ranks, and maneuvered like an army. Any independence seemed like a rebellion against his authority; he no more desired a riot of words and ideas than he wished to experience insurrection. He suspended *habeas corpus* with regard to thought as with regard to individual liberty. We also recognized that the public, weary of anarchy, willingly accepted their rulers' yoke once more.

The literature which expresses the new era has only held sway for forty or fifty years from the moment whose idiom it became. During this half century it has only been employed by the opposition. It was Madame de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Lemercier, Bonald, and, finally, I who first spoke that language. The changes in literature, which the nineteenth century boasted of, arose from *emigration* and exile; it was Monsieur de Fontanes who hatched these birds of another species than his own, because, returning to the seventeenth century, he had acquired the strength of those times, and forsaken the sterility of the eighteenth. One aspect of the human mind, that which deals with transcendental matters, advances alone at the same rate as civilization; unfortunately the glory of knowledge is not without its stains: Laplace, Lagrange, Cuvier, Monge, Chaptal, Berthollet, all those prodigies, once fierce democrats, became Napoleon's most obsequious servants. One must say this in honor of literature: the new literature was liberated, science was servile; character had not bowed to genius, yet those in whom thought had mounted to the heights of heaven, could not raise their souls above the level of Bonaparte's feet: they claimed to have no need of a God, because they had need of a tyrant.

Napoleonic classicism was the genius of the nineteenth century decked out in Louis XIV's wig, or curly-haired as in the time of Louis XV. Bonaparte wished the men of the Revolution only to appear at his court in formal dress, sword at side. One was not seeing the France of the time; it was not about rank, it was about discipline. Also, nothing was more tedious than that pallid resurrection of previous literature. That frigid copy, that unproductive anachronism vanished when the new literature made its thunderous appearance with *Le Génie du Christianisme*. The death of the Duc d'Enghien had the benefit for me, in setting me apart, of allowing me to follow my individual aspirations in solitude and prevented me from enlisting in the regular infantry of old Pindus: I owe my intellectual liberty to my moral liberty.

In the last chapter of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, I consider what might have happened to the world if the faith had not been preached at the moment of the Barbarian invasion; in a further paragraph, I mention an important study to be undertaken on the changes that Christianity brought in the law after the conversion of Constantine.

Supposing that religious opinion existed as it does now at the moment when I am writing, *Le Génie du Christianisme* being yet to do, I would create it quite differently than it is: instead of recalling the benefits and institutions of our religion in the past, I would show that Christianity is the thought of the future and of human liberty; that its redemptive and messianic thought is the sole basis for social equality; that it alone can establish it, because it sets the necessity of duty, the corrective to and regulator of the democratic instinct, alongside that equality. The law is not sufficient to control equality, because it is not permanent; it acquires its powers from legislation; but legislation is the work of men who change and vanish. A law is not always mandatory; it can always be altered by another law: morality on the other hand is permanent; its power is within, because it arises from the immutable order; that alone can give it durability.

I would show that wherever Christianity has been a dominant force, it has altered ideas, it has corrected our notions of justice and injustice, replaced doubt with affirmation, embracing all of humanity with its doctrines and precepts. I would try to estimate the distance we have yet to go to totally accomplish the message of the Gospels, while calculating the number of evils erased and improvements achieved in the eighteen centuries passed this side of the Crucifixion. Christianity acts slowly because it acts universally; it does not involve itself with the reform of a particular society, it works on society in general; its philanthropy extends to all the sons of Adam: it is what it expresses with marvelous simplicity in its commonest orisons, in its daily prayers, when it says to the crowd in the temple: '*Let us pray for all those on earth who are suffering.*' What other religion has ever spoken in that way! *The Word* was not made flesh in a man of joy, but in a man of sorrows, in order to liberate all, in a universal fraternity and an immense salvation.

If *Le Génie du Christianisme* had only given birth to such new investigations, I would congratulate myself for having published it: it is impossible to know whether, at the time when the book appeared, a different *Génie du Christianisme*, created on this new plan, that I have barely outlined, would have obtained the same success. In 1803, when nothing was accorded the old religion, when it was an object of disdain, when the first word on the subject was not understood, would one have been welcomed in speaking of future liberty descending from Calvary, when people were still wounded to excess by the freedom of the passions? Would Bonaparte have countenanced such a work? Perhaps it would have been useful in exciting regret, in interesting the imagination in a cause so poorly known, in drawing the gaze towards the object scorned, rendering it delightful, before showing how weighty, powerful and salutary it was.

Now, assuming that my name leaves some trace behind, I will owe it to *Le Génie du Christianisme*: without any illusions in regard to the intrinsic value of the work, I recognize an accidental value in it; it came just at the right moment. For that reason, it has given me my place in one of those historical epochs which, involving an individual with events, forces a remembrance of him. If the influence of my work is only limited to the changes that, for forty years, it has produced in the present generation; if it still serves to revive in the latecomers a glimmer of civilized truth on earth; if the slight traces of life that one thinks one detects are maintained in the generations to come, I will be full of hope in the divine mercy. Reconciled Christian, do not forget me in your prayers, when I am gone; perhaps my errors may detain me in front of those doors where my charity has cried out on your behalf: '*Open, ye everlasting doors! Elavimini, portae aeternales!*'

- Revised in December 1846.

End of Book XIII



## BOOK XIV

### CHAPTER 1

The years 1802 and 1803 – Châteaux – Madame de Custine – Monsieur de Saint-Martin – Madame d'Houdetot and Saint-Lambert

Paris, 1837 (Revised in December 1846)

My life became utterly confused as soon as it ceased to be mine. I had a crowd of acquaintances instead of my usual friends. I was invited to country houses that had been restored. People returned willy-nilly to those half-unfurnished half-furnished manors, where an old armchair stood alongside a new armchair. However, some of these manor houses were still intact, such as Le Marais, inherited by Madame de La Briche, an excellent woman whose good fortune was unavoidable. I remember that My Immortality went to the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer to take a seat for Le Marais in a wretched hired carriage, where I joined Madame de Vintimille and Madame de Fezensac. At Champlâtreux, Monsieur Molé had done up a few small rooms on the second floor. His father, executed during the Revolution, was represented by a painting, in a large dilapidated sitting room, in which Mathieu Molé was depicted, preventing a riot with a mitred hat: a painting which made the difference in epochs apparent. Part of a superb trio of radiating lime-tree avenues had been felled; but one of the three avenues still survived with all the magnificence of its former foliage; it has since been merged with new plantings: and we are among poplar-trees.

On return from emigration, there was no exile so poor he did not design the windings of an English garden for the ten feet of earth or courtyard he had recovered: did I myself not long ago plant out the Vallé-aux-Loups? Did I not begin these *Memoirs* there? Did I not continue them in the park at Montboissier, where they were trying to revive its appearance disfigured by neglect? Did I not continue them in the park at Maintenon restored not long ago, a new target for the coming democracy? The country houses burnt in 1789 should have served as a warning to the rest of those houses to remain concealed among their ruins: though the steeples of engulfed villages piercing the lava of Vesuvius do not prevent other churches and hamlets being re-established on that same lava.

Among the bees building their hive, was the Marquise de Custine, inheritor of the long tresses of Marguerite de Provence, the wife of Saint Louis, whose lineage she shared. I helped her take possession of Fervagues, and had the honor of sleeping in the Bearnais' bed, as I had slept in that of Queen Christina at Combours. It was no trivial business that journey; the carriage was required to receive Astolphe de Custine, her son, Monsieur Berstecher, the tutor, an old maid from Alsace who spoke only German, Jenny the chambermaid, and Trim, a famous dog, who ate the provisions for the journey. One would have thought these colonists were returning to Fervagues forever! And yet no sooner was the chateau re-furnished than the signal to leave was given. I have seen that woman who faced the scaffold with such great courage, I have seen her, whiter than one of the Fates, dressed in black, her body deathly thin, her head adorned only with her silken hair, I have seen her smile at me, her lovely teeth between pale lips, as she left Sécherons, near Geneva, to die at Bex, at the entrance to the Valais; I have heard her coffin go past at night in the empty streets of Lausanne to occupy its eternal place at Fervagues: she hastened to be buried in the earth that, like life, she had possessed for barely a moment. I have read in a chimney-corner in her chateau these risqué lines attributed to Gabrielle's lover:

*'The lady of Fervaques  
Warrants boldness of attack.'*

The soldier-king had claimed as much of many others: man's fleeting declarations, swiftly effaced and transferred from beauty to beauty, down to Madame de Custine. Fervaques has been sold.

I had met the Duchesse de Châtillon once more who, in my absence during the Hundred Days, adorned my valley of Aulnay. Madame Lindsay, whom I had never ceased seeing, introduced me to Julie Talma. Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre enticed me to her house. We had a grandmother in common, and she clearly wished to call me her cousin. The widow of the Comte de Clermont-Tonnere, she later married the Marquis de Talaru. In prison, she had converted Monsieur La Harpe. It was through her that I met the painter Neveu, enrolled among her cavalier-servantes. Neveu soon put me in touch with Saint-Martin.

Monsieur de Saint-Martin thought he had found certain hidden words in *Atala* of which I had no suspicion myself, and which proved to him that our ideas were related. Neveu, in order to unite these two brothers, had us to dinner in an upper room he inhabited in the outbuildings of the Palais-Bourbon. I arrived at the rendezvous at six; the philosopher of the heavens was already at his post. At seven, a discreet servant served some soup, retired and closed the door. We sat down and began to eat in silence. Monsieur de Saint-Martin, who, at other times, had very fine manners, only spoke a few short oracular words. Neveu replied with exclamations, changes of posture, and painterly grimaces: I said not a word.

At the end of half an hour, the necromancer returned, took away the soup and left another plate on the table: new dishes arrived thus one by one at long intervals. Monsieur de Saint-Martin, gradually warming up, began to speak like an archangel; the more he spoke, the more obscure his language became. Neveu had insinuated to me, while shaking my hand, that we would see extraordinary things, that we would hear noises: for six mortal hours I listened, and experienced nothing. At midnight, the visionary suddenly rose: I thought the spirit of darkness, or the divine spirit was descending, that bells would ring out in mysterious corridors; but Monsieur de Saint-Martin declared that he was tired, and that we would renew the conversation some other time; he took his hat and went. Unfortunately for him, he was stopped at the door and forced to return by an unexpected visitor: nevertheless he was not long in vanishing. I never saw him again: he rushed off to die in the garden of Monsieur Lenoir-Laroche, my neighbor at Aulnay.

I was an unruly subject for Swedenborgianism: the Abbé Faria, at a dinner at Madame de Custine's, boasted he would kill a canary by magnetizing it: the canary was all the livelier for it, and the Abbé, beside himself, was forced to leave the company, for fear of being killed by the canary: a Christian, my presence alone had rendered the experiment vain.

On another occasion, the celebrated Gall, a frequenter of Madame Custine's, dined beside me without knowing who I was, made an error concerning my facial planes, took me for a frog and, when he knew who I was, wished to rescue his science, in such a way as to make me ashamed for him. The shape of the head can aid in distinguishing the sex of an individual, in indicating what belongs to the creature, to the animal passions; as for the intellectual faculties, phrenology is forever ignorant of them. If one could gather together the various skulls of the great men who have died since the world began, and set them before the eyes of phrenologists without telling them to whom they belonged, they would not match a single brain correctly: the study of bumps produced the most comical errors.

I feel some remorse: I have spoken of Monsieur de Saint-Martin, with a degree of mockery, and I repent. This tendency to mockery which I repress and which continually emerges in me causes me suffering; since I despise the satirical spirit as the meanest, the commonest and most trivial of all; of course I do not mean here the proceedings of high comedy. Monsieur de Saint-Martin was, in the final result, a man of great merit, with a noble and independent character. When his ideas were explicable, they were lofty and of a superior nature. Ought I not to sacrifice the two preceding pages to the generous and much too flattering statements of the author of *the Portrait de Monsieur de Saint-Martin drawn by himself*? I would not hesitate to erase them, if what I say might harm, to the least degree in the world, Monsieur de Saint-Martin's great fame, and the esteem which will forever be attached to his memory. Besides I note with pleasure that my recollection is not at fault: Monsieur de Saint-Martin may not have been struck in an absolutely identical manner as I by the dinner of which I speak; but one can see that I have not invented the scene, and that Monsieur de Saint-Martin's description basically resembles mine.

*'On the 27th of January 1803,' he says, 'I met with Monsieur de Chateaubriand at a dinner arranged for that purpose, at Monsieur Neveu's, at the École Polytechnique. I would have much to gain by knowing him further: he is the only honest man of letters in whose presence I have been since I was born, and even then I only enjoyed his conversation over the meal. For immediately afterwards a visitor arrived who rendered him silent for the rest of the session and I do not know when the occasion might present itself again, since the ruler of this world has a great longing to put a spoke in the wheel of my cart. As for that, whom do I desire, but God?'*

Monsieur de Saint-Martin was a thousand times better than I; the dignity of that last phrase crushes my inoffensive mockery with the weight of grave human character.

I had seen Monsieur de Saint-Lambert and Madame d'Houdetot at Le Marais, both of whom represented the opinions and freedoms of other days, carefully preserved and mounted; it was the eighteenth century, dead, and fixed in place. It is enough to survive in life, for the illegitimate to become legitimate. One acquires an infinite esteem for immorality, merely because it has not ceased to be, and because time has adorned it with wrinkles. In truth, they were two virtuous spouses, who were not spouses, and who remained united by human regard, suffering somewhat from their venerable state; they were bored with and cordially detested themselves with all the bad humor of old age: that is God's justice.

*'Misfortune, to which the gods grant long years!'*

It was difficult to understand various pages of the *Confessions*, when one had seen the object of Rousseau's transports: had Madame d'Houdetot kept the letters Jean-Jacques wrote to her, and which he claimed to have been more brilliant than those of his Nouvelle Héloïse? One thinks she sacrificed herself to Saint-Lambert.

At nearly eighty years of age, Madame d'Houdetot could still write, in these pleasant lines:

*'Love consoles me, indeed!*

*Nothing will console me for him.'*

She never retired to bed without having struck the floor three times with her slipper, while calling to the late author of *Les Saisons*: ‘Goodnight, dear friend!’ That was what the philosophy of the eighteenth-century was reduced to, in 1803.

That society of Madame d’Houdetot, Diderot, Saint-Lambert, Rousseau, Grimm, and Madame d’Épinay, rendered the valley of Montmorency insupportable to me, and though, in the course of events, I might take comfort from the fact that a relic of Voltaire’s age appeared before my eyes, I have no regrets for those times. I had already seen at Sannois, the house where Madame d’Houdetot lived; it was no more than a ruined shell, reduced to four walls. An abandoned fireplace is always of interest; but what do those hearths say where neither beauty, nor the mother of a family, nor religion have sat, and whose ashes, if they have not been dispersed, only return the memory to days which have only known how to destroy?

BOOK XIV  
CHAPTER 2  
Travels in the French Midi (1802)

Paris, 1838

A pirated version of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, produced at Avignon, summoned me to the French Midi in the month of October 1802. I was only familiar with my humble Brittany and the Northern provinces, which I crossed when I left the country. I went to see the sun of Provence, that sky which would grant me a foretaste of Italy and Greece, towards which my instincts and my Muse drove me. I was in a cheerful mood; my reputation made life pleasant: there are a host of dreams associated with the first intoxication of fame, and the eyes are filled at first with delight in a rising star; but when the star fades, it leaves you in darkness; if it lasts, the habitual sight soon makes you insensible to it.

Lyon gave me a deep pleasure. I discovered the architecture of the Romans that I had not seen since the day when I read those pages of *Atala*, pulled from my haversack, in the amphitheater at Trèves. Small sailing boats crossed the Saône from shore to shore, carrying lights at night; women piloted them; a sailor girl of eighteen, who accepted me on board, re-adjusted the cluster of flowers pinned to her hat, after every stroke of the oar. I was woken each morning by the sound of bells. The monasteries suspended from the hillsides seemed to have regained their hermits. Monsieur Ballanche's son, owner of the printing rights to *Le Génie du Christianisme* after Monsieur Migneret, was my host: he became my friend. Who today does not know the Christian philosopher, whose writings shine with that peaceful clarity, on which one delights in casting one's gaze, as on the rays of a friendly star in the sky?

On the 27th of October, the mail-boat which carried me to Avignon, was forced to moor at Tain, because of a storm. I thought I was in America: the Rhône looked like my vast rivers of the wilderness. I was holed up in a little inn, at the edge of the water; a conscript stood by a corner of the hearth; he had his rucksack on his back and was off to rejoin the Army of Italy. I wrote on the chimney bellows, facing the hotelier, who sat in silence before me, and who, out of consideration for the traveller, prevented the cat and dog from making any noise.

What I was writing was an article, which I had almost completed on the preceding trip down the Rhône, relating to Monsieur de Bonald's *La Législation primitive*. I foresaw what has since happened: *'French literature,'* I said, *'is changing its aspect; new thoughts and new views on men and things were born with the Revolution. It is easy to foresee that writers will be divided. Some will strive to follow the old paths; others will endeavor to follow classical models, but present them however in a new light. It is quite likely that the latter will end by getting the upper hand over their adversaries, since by relying on the great tradition and great men they will possess the most trustworthy guides and the most fertile sources.'*

The lines which ended my criticism-while-travelling were historic; from that moment my spirit was in tune with my age; *'The author of this article,'* I wrote, *'cannot resist an image presented to him by the place in which he finds himself. At the very moment he writes these words, he is descending one of France's great rivers. On two mountains opposite twin ruined towers rise; at the summit of those towers little bells are fixed which the people of these hills ring to mark our passage. This river, those mountains, these bells, those Gothic monuments delight the spectators' eyes for a moment; but no one stops to pursue the bell's invitation. So men who preach morality and religion today, send out their signals in vain, from*

*the height of their ruins, to those whom the torrent of the age drags along; the traveller is astonished by the greatness of what remains, by the sweetness of the sound which echoes from it, by the majesty of the memories which inspired it, but he makes not a single alteration to his course, and at the next bend of the river, all is forgotten.'*

Arriving at Avignon on All Saint's Eve, a child offered me some books he was carrying: I bought at a stroke three different pirated editions of a little story called *Atala*. By going from bookshop to bookshop, I unearthed the counterfeiter, to whom I was unknown. He sold me the four volumes of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, at the reasonable price of nine francs a copy, and made me a grand eulogy of the work and the author. He lived in a fine house between a courtyard and a garden. I considered I had caught the magpie in its nest: at the end of twenty-four hours, I grew bored with chasing wealth, and came to an arrangement with the thief for a trivial amount.

I saw Madame de Janson, a cold little woman, white and resolute, who battled with the Rhône on her property, exchanging gunshots with the riverside dwellers, and defending herself against the years.

Avignon reminded me of a compatriot. Du Guesclin easily rivalled Bonaparte, since he saved France from conquest. Reaching this city of the Popes, with the adventurers whom his fame was leading into Spain, he said to the provost sent to him by the Pontiff: *'Brother, don't deceive me: from whom did this treasure come? Has the Pope dipped into his treasure?'* He replied in the negative, and that the residents of Avignon had each paid their portion. *'Then,'* said Bertrand, *'provost, I swear to you that we will not touch a penny of it, and we wish the money collected to be repaid to those who gave it, and tell the Pope clearly that he must return it to them: for if I hear to the contrary, it will weigh upon me; and having already crossed the sea, so I will return here.'* Then Bertrand was paid the ransom by the Pope, and his men immediately absolved, and the aforesaid primary absolution immediately confirmed.'

In the past transalpine journeys started from Avignon, it was the entrance to Italy. The geographies say: *'The Rhône is the King's, but the town of Avignon is watered by a branch of the River Sorgue, which is the Pope's.'* Is the Pope so certain of retaining ownership of the Tiber for long? At Avignon you can visit the Celestine monastery. Good King René, who lowered the taxes when the tramontane blew, painted a skeleton in one of the rooms of the Celestin monastery: it was that of a woman of great beauty whom he had loved.

In the Church of the Cordeliers, is the tomb of Madonna Laura: Francis I ordered it opened and saluted the immortalized ashes. The victor of Marignan left behind this epitaph for the new tomb which he had erected.

*'En petit lieux compris vous pouvez voir  
Ce qui comprend beaucoup par renommée:*

.....

*Ô gentille âme, estant tant estimée,  
Qui te pourra louer qu'en se taisant?  
Car la parole est toujours reprimee,  
Quant le sujet surmonte le disant.'*

*'Contained in brief space you may see  
Whom many know of by her fame:*

.....

*O noble soul, being so proclaimed  
Who could but by silence praise her?  
Since speech must ever be restrained  
When the subject outdoes the speaker.'*

When all is said and done, *the Father of Letters*, the friend of Benvenuto Cellini, Leonardo da Vinci, and Le Primatice, the king to whom we owe the Diana, sister of the Apollo Belvedere, and Raphael's Holy Family; the singer of Laura, the admirer of Petrarch, has received imperishable life from the fine arts, in gratitude.

I went to Vaucluse, to gather, at the edge of the spring, the perfumed heathers and the first olive from a young olive tree:

*'Chiara fontana in quel medesmo bosco  
sorgea d'un sasso, et acque fresche et dolci  
spargea, soavemente mormorando;  
al bel seggio, riposto, ombroso et fosco,  
né pastori appressavan né bifolci,  
ma ninphe et muse a quel tenor cantando.'*

*'In that same grove a crystal fountain sprang from beneath a stone, and sprinkled sweet fresh water, murmuring gently: no shepherd or flocks ever approached that lovely place, secret, shadowy and dark, but nymphs and Muses singing to its tones.'*

Petrarch has told how he found this valley: '*I was enquiring*', he says, '*about a secluded spot to which I could retire as to a harbor, when I discovered a little enclosed valley, Vaucluse, quite solitary, where the source of the Sorgue rose, queen of all springs: I established myself there. It is there where I composed my poetry in the native tongue; verse in which I described the sorrows of my youth.*'

It was in Vaucluse too that he heard, as one could still hear while I was passing by, the sound of weapons echoing through Italy; he cried:

*'Itala mia...*

.....

*O diluvio raccolto  
di che deserti strain  
per inondar i nostri dolci campi!*

.....

*Non è questo 'l terren ch'i' toccai pria?  
Non è questo il mio nido  
ove nudrito fui sí dolcemente?  
Non è questa la patria in ch'io mi fido,  
madre benigna et pia,  
che copre l'un et l'altro mio parente?*

*'My Italy! .... O waters gathered from desert lands to inundate our sweet fields! Is this not the earth that I first touched? Is this not my nest where I was so sweetly nourished? Is this not the land I trust, benign and gentle mother that covers both my parents?'*

Later, Laura's lover urged Urban V to transfer the Papacy to Rome: 'What will you say to Saint Peter,' he demanded eloquently, 'when he asks you "What is happening in Rome? What is the state of my Church, my tomb, my people? You say nothing? Where are you from? You have lived on the Banks of the Rhône? You were born there, you say: and I was I not born in Galilee?"'

Fertile age, young, sensitive, admiration for which stirs the heart; age which obeyed a great poet's lyre, as if it were a legislator's law! It is to Petrarch we owe the return of the sovereign Pontiff to the Vatican; it is his voice which gave birth to Raphael and raised Michelangelo's dome from the earth.

On my return to Avignon, I visited the Papal Palace, and they showed me La Tour de la Glacière: the Revolution concerned itself with famous places; the memories of the past are forced to traverse, and grow green again on, human remains. Alas! The groans of victims die soon after them; they scarcely produce an echo that survives a moment, when once the voice that breathes them is extinguished. But though the cries of pain have vanished from the banks of the Rhone, one still hears in the distance the sound of Petrarch's lute; a solitary canzone, escaping from the tomb, continues to grace Vaucluse with an immortal sadness and the sorrows of a past love.

Alain Chartier was carried from Bayeux to be buried in the Church of Saint-Antoine at Avignon. He wrote La Belle Dame sans mercy, and Margeret of Scotland's kiss inspired it.

From Avignon I went on to Marseilles. What more could a town desire to which Cicero, whose oratorical manner has been imitated by Bossuet, addressed these words, 'I will never forget you, Marseilles, whose virtue is of so eminent a degree that most nations must yield to you, and to which even Greece should not compare itself.' (Pro L Flacco). Tacitus, in his life of Agricola, also praises Marseille, which mingles Greek urbanity with the industry of the Roman provinces. Daughter of Hellenism, civilizer of Gaul, celebrated by Cicero, taken by Caesar, are you not wedded to glory? I hastened to climb up to Notre-Dame de la Garde, to gaze at the sea that borders the smiling coastlines of all famous nations of antiquity and their ruins. That sea, without tides, is the source of mythology, as the ocean, which ebbs and flows twice a day, is the abyss to which Jehovah said: 'You shall go no further.'

This very year, 1838, I climbed again to that summit; I looked again at that sea which is now so well-known to me, on whose far side the victorious cross and tomb were raised. The mistral blew; I entered the fort built by Francis I, guarded by a single veteran of the Army of Egypt, and where a conscript destined for Algeria stood lost among the gloomy vaults. Silence reigned in the restored chapel, while the



wind moaned outside. The Breton sailors' hymn to *Notre-Dame de Bon-Secours* came to mind: you know when and where I have already quoted that lament of my early days beside the Ocean:

*'I place my confidence,  
Virgin, in your aid,' etc.*

What events it had taken to bring me back to the feet of the *Star of the Seas*, to whom I had been dedicated in childhood! When I contemplated the *ex-votos*, those paintings of shipwrecks hanging from the walls around me, I thought I was reading the story of my days. Virgil depicted a Trojan beneath the porticos of Carthage, amazed at the sight of a picture representing the burning of Troy, and the genius of the author of *Hamlet* benefited from the soul of the author who sang of *Dido*.

At the foot of the cliff, once covered by the forest Lucan sings of, I no longer recognized Marseilles: I could no longer lose my way among those straight streets, built long and wide. The port was choked with vessels; twenty six years before, I had trouble finding a single *nave*, captained by a descendant of Pytheas, to carry me to Cyprus like Joinville: unlike men, time rejuvenates cities. I preferred my old Marseilles, with its memories of Bérenger, the Duc d'Anjou, King René, De Guise and D'Épernon, with its statues of Louis XIV and Belzunce's virtues; the wrinkles on its brow pleased me. Perhaps in regretting the years now lost to it, I was doing no more than bemoaning those I had known myself. Marseilles welcomed me graciously, it is true: but that rival of Athens is now too young for me.

If Alfieri's *memoirs* had been published in 1802 I would not have left Marseilles without visiting the rock from which the poet bathed. This crude man did at least once achieve grace of thought and expression:

*'After the sights,' he says, 'one of my amusements at Marseilles was to bathe in the sea almost every evening; I found a very pleasant little spot on a spit of land set to the right of the port, where, seated on the sand, my back against a rock, preventing anyone seeing me from the coast side, I had nothing before me but sea and sky. Between those two immensities, adorned by a setting sun, I spent, in dreaming, delightful hours; and there, I would have become a poet, if I had known how to write it in some language or other.'*

I returned through Languedoc and Gascony. At Nîmes, the Amphitheatre and the Maison-Carré were not yet cleared; this year 1838, I have seen them during the excavations. I also went to find Jean Reboul. I somewhat question the idea of these worker-poets, who are customarily neither poets, nor workers: redress therefore to Monsieur Reboul. I found him in his bakery; I addressed him without knowing to whom I spoke, not distinguishing him from his companions of Ceres. He took my name and told me he would go and see if the person I had asked for was at home. He quickly returned and made himself known: he led me into his store-room; we navigated a labyrinth of flour sacks, and climbed up a kind of ladder into a tiny room, as if into the high loft of a windmill. There we sat and talked. I was as happy as if I were in my London attic, and happier than in my chair at the Ministry in Paris. Monsieur Reboul had taken a manuscript from a chest of drawers, and read me some lively verses of a poem he had composed on *The Last Day*. I congratulated him on his religion and his talent. I remember these excellent lines to *an Exile*:

*'Something of grandeur in this world is stirring;  
Your soul shall respond to it, O our young king;*

*Ah! Not without purpose, has Heaven displayed,  
Calming our grief, through the dying, your fate;  
That, from his watching sons, in the after days,  
Universally seen, a proud nation might raise  
You, high in its arms, on the edge of a grave!*

I had to leave my host, but not without wishing the poet joy of the gardens of Horace. I would rather have seen him dreaming beside the Tiber, than collecting corn milled by a wheel driven by its flow. It is true that Sophocles may have been a blacksmith in Athens, and Plautus, in Rome, presaged Reboul at Nîmes.

Between Nîmes and Montpellier, I passed Aigues-Mortes on my left, which I have visited again in 1838. The town is still completely intact with walls and towers: it resembles a high-sided vessel grounded among the sands from which Saint-Louis departed, time and the tides. The saintly king gave the town of Aigues-Mortes its statutes and customs: *‘He wished the prison to be such that it served not to destroy people but to protect them; that no legal investigation should be made of insulting speech; that even adulterers should only be sought out in certain cases, and that the violator of a virgin, volente vel nolente (willing or unwilling), should lose neither life nor any member, sed alio modo puniatur (but should be punished in some other way).*

At Montpellier, I saw the sea again, to which I would willingly have written, like the Christian king to the Swiss Confederation: *‘My faithful ally and great friend.’* Scaliger would have liked to make Montpellier the nest of his old age. It received its name from two sacred virgins, *Mons puellarum* (the hill of the young girls): and from that, the beauty of its women. Montpellier in falling to Cardinal Richelieu, witnessed the death of the aristocratic constitution of France.

From Montpellier to Narbonne, I experienced, on the road, a flood of daydreams, a return to my natural disposition. I would have forgotten the attack, like other illnesses of the imagination, if I had not made a note of the critical day on a slip of paper, the only note I have discovered from that time to aid my memory. On this occasion it was an arid waste covered with foxgloves that made me forget the world: my gaze glided over that sea of purple stems, and was only arrested in the distance by the bluish mountains of Cantal. In nature, apart from the sky, ocean and sun, it is not the largest objects that inspire me; they only give me a sensation of grandeur, which hurls my littleness, distraught and un-consoled, at the feet of God. But a flower I have picked, a current of water slipping through the bull-rushes, a bird which goes flying and perching before me, entangles me in all sorts of dreams. Is it not better to be moved without knowing why, than to search out dull pursuits in life, chilled by their repetition and their number? Everything is worn out these days, even tragedy.

At Narbonne, I encountered the Canal des Deux-mers. Corneille, singing the praises of this work, added his greatness to that of Louis XIV:

*‘Garonne and the Aude, in their deep caves,  
Sighed, through the years, to unite their waves,  
That from their happy affection might flow  
Treasures of dawn, to meet evening’s glow.*

*But to such fond wishes, to passions so pure  
Nature, which bows to eternal law,  
Proudly laid down invincible obstacles  
Imprisoning frightful cliffs and pinnacles.*

*France! Your great King spoke, rocks split in two  
Earth opened its breast, the high hills fell too.*

*All yielded.....’*

At Toulouse, I saw the line of the Pyrenees from the bridge over the Garonne; I was obliged to cross it four years later; horizons succeed each other like our days. They proposed to show me, in a cave, the desiccated corpse of La Belle Paule: happy those who believe without having seen! Montmorency was decapitated here in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville: was that severed head of such importance then, since we still speak of it after so many other heads have fallen? I do not know if there is a witness’s deposition, anywhere in the history of criminal proceedings, which better testifies to a man’s identity: ‘*The smoke and flames in which he was enveloped,*’ says Guitaut, ‘*prevented me from recognizing him at first; but seeing a man, who after breaking through six of our ranks, still managed to kill some soldiers of the seventh, I judged that it could only be Monsieur de Montmorency; I became certain when I saw him thrown to earth beneath his dead mount.*’

I was struck by the architecture of the abandoned church of Saint-Sernin. This church is bound up with the history of the Albigensians, which the poem, so well translated by Monsieur Fauriel, has revived:

*‘The valiant young Count, the light and the heir of his father, the cross and the sword, entered together through one of the doors. Not one young girl remained in her room or upstairs; the inhabitants of the town, young and old, all regarded the Count as the flower of the rose.’*

It is from the era of Simon de Montfort that the withering of the language of Oc dates: ‘*Simon, being lord of so much territory, divided it among the nobles, as much to the French as others, atque loci leges dedimus (and we gave laws to the lands),*’ said the signatories, eight archbishops and bishops.

I would have liked to have had the time in Toulouse to enquire about one of the men I most admire, Cujas, writing, lying face down, his books spread around him. I wonder if they have retained the memory there of Suzanne, his daughter, twice married. Constancy gave Suzanne little pleasure, she paid scant attention to it; but she nurtured one of her husbands on the infidelities which killed the other. Cujas was supported by Francis I’s daughter, Pibrac by the daughter of Henri II, two Marguerites, of Valois blood, the pure blood of the Muses. Pibrac is celebrated for his translations of Persian quatrains. (I may have been staying in his father the president’s house.). ‘*This fine Monsieur de Pibrac,*’ says Montaigne, ‘*had a spirit so gentle, such sound opinions, such mild manners; his soul was so untainted by our corruption and our passions!*’ And yet he had praised the Saint Bartholomew massacre!

I rushed past without being able to stop; fate sent me back in 1838 in order to admire Raimond de Saint-Gilles’ city in detail, and to speak of new acquaintances I had made; Monsieur de Lavergne, a man of talent, wit, and reason; Mademoiselle Honorine Gasc, a future Malibran. The latter, in my new role of servant to Clémence Isaure, reminded me of those lines that Chapelle and Bachaumont wrote on the island of Ambijoux, near Toulouse:

*'Ah! How happy, without strife,  
In this sweet place, deserving envy,  
If, forever loved by Sylvie,  
With her, one might spend one's life!  
Enamored for eternity!'*

Let Mademoiselle Honorine be wary of her lovely voice! Talent is made of Toulouse gold: it brings bad luck.

Bordeaux was barely rid of its scaffolds and its cowardly Girondins. All the towns I saw had the air of beautiful women recovering from a violent illness who had scarce begun to breathe again. At Bordeaux, Louis XIV had once pulled down the Temple of the Tutelary Goddess, in order to build the Château-Trompette: Spon and the friends of antiquity mourned:

*'Why demolish these, the gods' own pillars,  
A tutelary monument, work of the Caesars?'*

The few remains of the Amphitheatre are barely visible. If one granted an expression of regret to everything which falls, it would require too many tears.

I embarked for Blaye. I saw the chateau which was then unknown, to which, in 1833, I addressed these words: *'Captive of Blaye! I regret my powerlessness regarding your current fate!'* I headed for Rochefort, and reached Nantes via the Vendée.

The countryside revealed, like an old warrior, scars and mutilations attributable to its courage. Remains bleached by time, and ruins blackened by flames, met one's gaze. When the Vendéans were about to attack their enemy, they knelt to receive the priest's blessing: the prayer pronounced over their weapons was not deemed useless, since a Vendéan who raised his sword to heaven, demanded victory and not life.

The coach, I found myself interred in, was full of travellers who told stories of the violation and murder with which they had glorified their lives during those wars in the Vendée. My heart quickened, when after crossing the Loire at Nantes, I entered Brittany. I passed the walls of the College at Rennes which saw the last days of my childhood. I could only stay with my wife and sisters for twenty-four hours, before regaining Paris.

## BOOK XIV

### CHAPTER 3

The years 1802 and 1803 – Monsieur de La Harpe: his death

Paris, 1838

I arrived in time to witness the death of a man who belonged among those superior names of the second degree in the eighteenth century, and who, forming a solid second rank within society, gave that society fullness and consistency.

I had known Monsieur La Harpe in 1789: like Flins, he was seized by a strong passion for my sister, Madame la Comtesse de Farcy. He appeared with three large volumes of his works under his short arms, utterly amazed that his glory had not triumphed over the most rebellious hearts. The words lofty, the expression animated, he thundered against abuses, making do with an omelet at the houses of Ministers where he found the dinner unsatisfactory, eating with his fingers, trailing his cuffs through the dishes, speaking coarse philosophy to the grandest lords who enjoyed his effronteries; but, in sum, an honest spirit, enlightened, impartial in the midst of his passion, capable of appreciating talent, of admiring it, of weeping at a lovely line or a fine action, and possessing one of those true natures capable of repentance. He did not fail in death: I saw him die a brave Christian: his interests were broadened by religion, being a man without pride except in countering impiety, and without hatred except in countering *revolutionary language*.

By the time I returned from the Emigration, religion had led Monsieur de La Harpe to a favorable view of my works: the illness from which he suffered did not prevent him from working; he recited to me several passages from a poem he had composed on the Revolution; it contained powerful lines against the crimes of the age and against the honest men who had tolerated them:

*‘Yet if they dared all, you have permitted all:  
The viler the master is, the worse the slave.’*

Forgetting that he was unwell, wearing a white nightcap, and dressed in a wadded woolen jacket, he would declaim at the top of his voice; then letting his notebook fall, he would say in a barely audible voice: *‘I can’t go on: I feel a claw like fire in my side.’* But if, by misfortune, a servant happened to appear, he would resume his Stentorian tone and bellow: *‘Off with you! Off with you! And close the door!’* I said to him one day: *‘You will live, to the benefit of religion.’* – *‘Ah, yes!’* he replied, *‘That would be pleasant of God; but he does not wish it, and I will die one of these days.’* Falling back into his armchair and pulling his cap over his ears, he atoned for his pride with resignation and humility.

At a dinner at Migneret’s house, I heard him speak of himself with the greatest modesty, declaring that he had achieved nothing of the highest order, but that he believed art and language had not degenerated in his hands.

Monsieur de La Harpe left this world on the 11th of February 1803: the author of *Les Saisons* died two days before him amidst all the consolations of philosophy, as Monsieur La Harpe did amidst all the consolations of religion; the former visited by men, the latter visited by God.

Monsieur de La Harpe was buried on the 12th of February 1803, in the Cemetery of the Vaugirard Gate. The coffin having been set down beside the grave, Monsieur de Fontanes gave a speech, standing on the little mound of earth which would soon fill it. The scene was gloomy: swirls of snow fell from the sky and whitened the funeral drape which the wind lifted, to allow those last words of friendship to reach the ears of the dead. The cemetery has been destroyed and Monsieur de La Harpe exhumed: hardly anything remains of his scant ashes. Re-married under the Directory, Monsieur de La Harpe had been unfortunate in his lovely wife; she had developed a dislike for the sight of him, and would never accord him any rights.

For the rest, Monsieur de La Harpe had, like everything else, been diminished by the Revolution which always grew in scope: the famous hastened to withdraw before the representative of that Revolution, as danger lost its potency before him.

## BOOK XIV

### CHAPTER 4

The years 1802 and 1803 – Interview with Napoleon

Paris, 1838

While we were occupied with everyday life and death, the world's great advance was accomplished; the Man of his time took up his place of honor at the head of the human race. In the midst of immense changes, the precursors of a universal movement, I had disembarked at Calais in order to join in the general activity, to the degree allotted to every soldier. I arrived, in the first year of the century, at Bonaparte's camp where he beat out the drum-roll of destiny: he soon became First Consul for life.

After the adoption of the Concordat by the Legislative Body in 1802, Lucien, the Interior Minister, gave a reception for his brother; I was invited to attend, as one who had rallied the forces of Christianity and had led them back to the charge. I was in the gallery when Napoleon entered: he struck me agreeably; I had not seen him before except at a distance. His smile was soft and pleasant; his eyes were admirable, especially in the manner in which they were set beneath his forehead and framed by his eyebrows. There was no charlatanism in his gaze as yet, nothing theatrical or affected. *Le Génie du Christianisme*, which was making a considerable stir at that time, had moved Napoleon. A prodigious imagination animated that cold-blooded politician: he would not have been what he was if the Muse had not been present in him; reason carried out a poet's ideas. All the men who lead great lives possess a dual nature, since they must be capable of inspiration and action: one conceives the project, the other executes it.

Bonaparte saw me and recognized me, I have no idea how. When he made his way towards me, no one knew whom he was seeking; the ranks opened successively; everyone was hoping that the Consul would stop in front of them; he had the look of a man experiencing some impatience with those misapprehensions. I sank back behind my neighbors; Bonaparte suddenly raised his voice and said: '*Monsieur de Chateaubriand!*' I was left standing alone there, in front, since the crowd stepped back and then quickly reformed a circle around the speakers. Bonaparte addressed me simply: without complimenting me, without idle questions, without preamble, he spoke to me immediately about Egypt and the Arabs, as if I had always been in his confidence, and as if we were merely continuing a conversation we had already begun. '*I was always struck,*' he said, '*when I saw the sheikhs fall to their knees in the midst of the desert, turn towards the east and touch the sand with their foreheads. What was that unknown thing they were worshipping in the east?*'

Bonaparte interrupted himself, and passed on to another idea without transition: '*Christianity? Haven't the ideologists tried to make an astronomical system out of it? If that should be the case, do they think to persuade me that Christianity is therefore trivial? If Christianity is an allegory of the movement of spheres, the geometry of stars, the free thinkers have done well, since despite themselves they have still left sufficient grandeur to l'infâme.*'

Bonaparte suddenly moved away. Like Job, in my darkness, '*a spirit passed before me; the hair of my flesh stood up; it stood still: but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice...*'

My days have been only a series of visions; Hell and Heaven have continually opened beneath my feet and above my head, without granting me the time to explore their darkness and light. On the shore of two worlds, and on only one occasion in each case, I have encountered the great man of the last century and the great man of the new, Washington and Napoleon. I spoke for a moment with each; both sent me back to my solitude, the first with a kindly wish, the second through a crime.

I noticed that while circling the throng, Bonaparte glanced at me in a more profound manner than he had gazed while speaking to me. I followed him also with my eyes:

*‘Chi e quell grande, che non par che curi L’incendio?’*

*‘Who is that great spirit, who seems indifferent to the fire?’* (Dante).



## BOOK XIV

### CHAPTER 5

The year 1803 – I am named as First Secretary to the Embassy in Rome

Paris, 1837

Following this interview, Bonaparte thought of me for Rome: he had judged at a glance where and how I could be of use. It mattered little to him that I had not been immersed in public affairs, that I knew not the first thing about diplomatic practice; he believed that such minds as mine always have an understanding, and can do without an apprenticeship. He was a great discoverer of men; but he wished them to possess talent only for his employment, even then on condition that it was little talked of: jealous of all fame, he regarded it as a usurpation of what was due to himself: there was to be no-one but Napoleon in the universe.

Fontanes and Madame Bacciochi told me of the satisfaction the Consul had taken in my conversation: I had not opened my mouth; that was as much as to say that Bonaparte was content with himself. They urged me to profit from my good fortune. The idea of accepting an appointment had never occurred to me; I firmly refused. Then, they asked an authority whom it was difficult to resist if he would speak to me.

The Abbé Émery, the superior of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, came to entreat me, in the name of the clergy, to accept for the good of religion the position of First Secretary to the Embassy, Bonaparte intending to appoint his own uncle, Cardinal Fesch as Ambassador. He gave me to understand that the Cardinal's intellect was not exactly remarkable, and I would soon find myself the master of the Embassy's affairs. A singular chance had established a link between Abbe Émery and me: I had travelled to the United States with Abbé Nagot and his seminarists, as you know. That memory of my obscurity, my youth, my life as a voyager, reflecting on my public life, took hold of my feelings and imagination. Abbé Émery, well-regarded by Napoleon, was made lean by nature, religion, and the Revolution; yet this threefold early experience simply allowed him to profit from his true merit; ambitious only to do good works, he restricted his actions to achieving the greatest benefit for his seminary. Circumspect in his words and actions, it would have been pointless to show violence to Abbé Émery, since he always placed his whole self at your service, while never yielding his will: his strength was in waiting for you, as if seated on his tomb.

He failed in his first approach to me; he returned to the attack, and patiently convinced me. I accepted the position which it was his mission to propose to me, without being the least bit convinced of my ability for the post to which I was nominated; I am worth nothing in a supporting role. I would probably still have declined it, if the thought of Madame de Beaumont had not occurred to put an end to my scruples. Madame de Montmorin's daughter was dying; the Italian climate, it was claimed, would be beneficial to her; my going to Rome would persuade her to cross the Alps: I sacrificed myself in the hope of saving her. Madame de Chateaubriand prepared to join me; Monsieur Joubert talked of accompanying me, and Madame de Beaumont left for Mont Dore, so as to further her recovery by the banks of the Tiber.

Monsieur de Talleyrand held the Foreign Ministry; he forwarded me my nomination. I dined with him; thus it has lodged in my mind that he considered himself to be of the first moment. For the rest, his fine manners contrasted with those of the rogues who made up his entourage; his displays of cunning took on

unimaginable importance: in the eyes of a ruthless wasp's nest, his moral corruption appeared as genius, his slightness of wit profundity. The Revolution was too modest; it did not celebrate his superiority sufficiently: it is not the same thing to be above crime as to be beneath it.

I met the ecclesiastics attached to the Cardinal: I singled out the good-humored Abbé de Bonnevie: once chaplain to the Army of Princes, he was involved in the retreat at Verdun; he had also been chief curate to the Bishop of Châlons, Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre, who left after us to claim a pension from the Holy See, in the person of Chiaramonte. Having completed my preparations, I set out: I was required to arrive in Rome before Napoleon's uncle.

## BOOK XIV

### CHAPTER 6

The year 1803 – Journey from Paris to the Savoy Alps

Paris, 1838

At Lyons, I met my friend Monsieur Ballanche once more. I was a witness to the renewed celebration of Corpus-Christi; I considered I had played a part in those flowery wreaths, in that heavenly joy that I had recalled to earth.

I continued my journey; a cordial reception awaited me everywhere; my name was associated with the re-establishment of the altars. The greatest pleasure I have known is to have felt myself honored in France and noted with serious interest abroad. It sometimes happened, as I was resting in a village inn, that I would see a father and mother enter with their son: they would tell me they had brought their child along to thank me. Was it self-esteem then which granted me the pleasure of which I speak? What did it matter to my vanity that unknown and honest people testified to their happiness on a public highway, in a place where no one could hear them? What moved me, at least I dare to think so, was my having done a little good, consoled the distressed, caused the rebirth in the depths of a mother's heart of the hope of raising her son a Christian, that is to say an obedient son, respectful, attached to his parents. Would I have tasted that pure joy if I had written a book whose morals and religion raised groans?

The road from Lyons is fairly gloomy: from Tour-du-Pin to Pont-de-Beauvoisin, it is cool and wooded.

At Chambéry, where Bayard's chivalrous soul displayed itself so admirably, a man was welcomed by a woman, and as payment for the hospitality he had received, he considered himself philosophically obliged to dishonour her. Such is the danger of literature; the desire for fame overcomes generosity of feeling: if Rousseau had never become a celebrated writer, he would have buried the frailties of the woman who had nurtured him among the valleys of Savoy; he would have been subject to the same faults as his friend; he would have helped her in old age, instead of contenting himself with giving her a snuffbox, and vanishing. Ah! Never may the voice of friendship betrayed be raised against our tomb!

Having passed Chambéry, the Isère's channel appears. Everywhere in these valleys one meets with crosses at the roadsides, and madonnas among the pine woods. The little churches, surrounded by trees, provide a moving contrast with the high mountains. When winter storms blow down from those ice-crowned summits, the Savoyard takes shelter in his rural temple and prays.

The valleys one enters above Montmélian are bordered by hills of various shapes, sometimes half-naked, sometimes clothed with forest.

Aiguebelle seems close to the Alps; but turning the corner of some isolated rock, fallen across the road, you see fresh valleys along the course of the River Arc.

The hills stand high on both sides; their flanks become perpendicular; their sterile summits begin to reveal glaciers: torrents fall to swell the Arc which flows wildly. In the midst of the tumult of waters, you find a careless waterfall falling with infinite grace beneath a curtain of willows.

Passing Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne and arriving towards sunset at Saint-Michel, I failed to find a horse: obliged to halt, I took a walk beyond the village. The air over the mountain crests became translucent; their indentations were drawn with extraordinary clarity, while a deep shadow emerging from their feet climbed towards their summits. The nightingale's voice sounded from below, the eagle's cry from above; service-trees flowered in the valley, white snow on the mountain. A castle, the work of Carthaginians, according to popular tradition, was visible on an outcrop cut sheer from the cliff. There, one man's hatred, more powerful than any obstacle, was enshrined in stone. The vengeance of a race which could only rise to greatness through slavery and the blood of the rest of the world, weighed on a free people.

I left at daybreak and arrived, towards two in the afternoon, at Lans-le-bourg, at the foot of Mont Cenis. Entering the village, I saw a peasant grasping an eaglet by its feet; a pitiless throng were striking at the young king, insulted in the weakness of his youth and fallen majesty; the father and mother of the noble orphan had been killed: they suggested I buy him; he died of the harsh treatment they had subjected him to before I could rescue him. I was reminded, then, of poor little Louis XVII; I think today of Henri V: how swiftly fall and misfortune come!

Here, one begins the ascent of Mont Cenis, leaving behind the little river Arc, which leads you to the foot of the mountain. On the far side of Mont Cenis, the Doria opens the gate of Italy to you. Rivers are not merely great flowing roads, as Pascal called them, they even trace out the route for men.

When I found myself on the crest of the Alps for the first time, a strange emotion gripped me; I was like that skylark which, at the same moment as me, crossed the frozen plateau, and having sung its little song of the plain, fell among the snow, instead of descending to the fields. The stanzas these mountains inspired in me in 1822 evoke perfectly the feelings they stirred in me in 1803 at the same spot:

*'Alps, you have never suffered my fate!  
You are unchanged by time;  
Lightly, your foreheads carry those days  
Weighing heavily on mine.*

*When, for that first time, filled with hope,  
I crossed your battlements,  
An immense future, the horizon, opened  
To my sight and sense.*

*Italy beneath my feet, before me, the world!*

Did I really penetrate that world, then? Christopher Columbus had a vision which revealed to him the world of his daydreams, before he had discovered it; Vasco de Gama met the giant of the storms on the road: which of those two great men foreshadowed my future? What I would have liked before all else would have been a life made glorious by a brilliant end, but by its very nature obscure. Do you know who's the first remains were to rest in America? Those of Biorn the Scandinavian: he died in sight of Vinland, and was buried on a promontory by his companions. Who remembers that? Who knows of him whose sail preceded the Genoese captain's ship to the New World? Biorn sleeps on the headland of an unknown cape, and his name has been transmitted to us for a thousand years only through the poetic sagas, in a language that no one now speaks.

## BOOK XIV

### CHAPTER 7

#### From Mont Cenis to Rome – Milan and Rome

I had begun my travels in the opposite direction to other voyagers: the ancient forests of America were revealed to me before the ancient cities of Europe. I arrived in the midst of the latter at the moment when they were dying and being reborn simultaneously in a fresh revolution. Milan was occupied by our troops; they had finished demolishing the castle, a witness to the wars of the Middle Ages.

The French Army had established itself, like a military colony, in the Lombardy plains. Guarded here and there by their comrades, acting as sentinels, these foreigners from Gaul, wearing policemen's caps, carrying a sabre instead of a sickle strapped to their tight jackets, had the air of attentive and joyful reapers. They moved stones, rolled cannons, drove wagons; and erected sheds and huts made of branches. Horses leapt, pranced and reared among the throng like dogs fondled by their masters. Italian girls sold fruit from stalls in the marketplace of this military fairground: our soldiers made them presents of pipes and matches, saying to them, as their fore-fathers, barbarians of old, had said to their sweethearts: '*I, Fotrad, son of Eupert, of the race of Franks, give to you, Helgine, my dear wife, in honor of your beauty (in honore pulchritudinis tuae), my house in the district of Pins.*'

We were a singular enemy: they found us somewhat insolent at first, a little too cheerful, too restless, instead of our turning on our heels and walking away so they might regret us. Lively, witty, intelligent, French soldiers involve themselves in the occupations of the inhabitants with whom they lodge; they draw water from the well, as Moses did for the daughters of Midian, follow the shepherds, drive lambs to the sheep-dip, chop wood, lay fires, watch the cooking-pot, carry an infant in their arms or put it to bed in its cot. Their good humor and activity gives life to everything; it is customary to regard them as adjuncts to the family. The drum beats? The lodger runs for his musket, leaves his host's daughters weeping at the door, and quits the cottage, which he thinks no more of until he reaches the Invalides.

On my journey to Milan, a great people awakened, and opened their eyes for a moment. Italy roused herself from slumber, and remembered her genius, like a divine dream: aiding our own renaissance, she brought grandeur of a transalpine nature to the meanness of our poverty, nurtured as she was, that Ausonia, with artistic masterpieces and the noble tales of a famous country. Austria came and spread her cloak of lead over the Italians; she forced them to step back into their coffin. Rome has returned to ruins, Venice to the sea. Venice is subsiding while embellishing the heaven of its last smile; she has settled charmingly into the waves, like a star which ought no longer to rise.

General Murat was in command of Milan. I had a letter for him from Madame Bacciochi. I spent the day with his aides-de-camp: they were not as poor as my comrades at Thionville. French chivalry had reappeared in the army; it was determined to prove itself forever of the age of Lautrec.

I dined at a grand official reception, on the 23rd of June, at Monsieur de Melzi's, on the occasion of the baptism of General Murat's child. Monsieur de Melzi had known my brother: the Vice-President of the Cisalpine Republic had excellent manners: his house resembled that of one who had always been a prince: he treated me politely but coldly; he found me exactly akin in disposition to himself.

I reached my destination on the 27th of June in the evening, two days before the feast of Saint Peter: the Prince of the Apostles was waiting for me, as my patron saint has received me since in Jerusalem. I had followed the route from Florence, through Siena and Radicofani. I hastened to make my visit to Monsieur Cacault, whom Cardinal Fesch was succeeding, while I was replacing Monsieur Artaud.

On the 28th of June, I rushed about all day: I took a first look at the Coliseum, the Pantheon, Trajan's Column, and Castel Sant'Angelo. In the evening Monsieur Artaud took me to a ball in a house near Saint-Peter's Square. One could see revolving fireworks on Michelangelo's dome, between the whirling waltzes that skimmed past the open windows; the rockets sent up from Hadrian's Mound blossomed over Saint Onofrio, and the tomb of Tasso: silence, abandonment, and night filled the Roman Campagna.

Next day, I attended the service at Saint Peter's. Pius VII, pale, sad and religious, was a true Pontiff of tribulations. Two days afterwards, I was presented to His Holiness: he made me sit near him. A volume of *Le Génie du Christianisme* lay obligingly open on his desk. Cardinal Consalvi, flexible but firm, his resistance gentle and polite, was a living example of the ancient Roman politician, representing less the faith of the times and more the tolerance of the century.

Traversing the Vatican, I stopped to contemplate the stairs which one could climb on mule's back, those ascending galleries echoing one another, adorned with masterpieces, along which the Popes once passed in all their pomp, those Loggias which so many immortal artists decorated, so many illustrious writers admired, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, Montaigne, Milton, Montesquieu, and then the kings and queens, in power or out, and finally a race of pilgrims come from the four corners of the earth: all that now silent and without movement; a theatre in which the deserted terraces, exposed to solitude, are scarcely visited by a ray of sunlight.

I was advised to walk in the moonlight: from the heights of Trinita dei Monti, the distant edifices seemed like an artist's sketches or like misted shores seen from the sea, on board ship. The Moon, that globe that one takes for a complete world, slid its pale deserts over the deserts of Rome; it lit streets without people, enclosures, squares, gardens where no one stirred, monasteries where one no longer heard the voices of the coenobites, cloisters as dumb and unpopulated as the porticos of the Coliseum.

What was happening eighteen centuries ago, at this very hour in this very place? Who traversed the shadows of the obelisks here, after these shadows had ceased to fall over the sands of Egypt? Not only is ancient Italy no more, but the Italy of the Middle Ages has vanished also. Yet, the traces of those two Italy's are still present in the Eternal City: if modern Rome displays its Saint-Peter's and its masterpieces, ancient Rome counters with its Pantheon and its ruins; if the one is descended from the Capitol of the consuls, the other reveals the Vatican of the pontiffs. The Tiber separates the twin glories: founded on the same dust, pagan Rome is sinking further and further into its tombs, while Christian Rome returns little by little to its catacombs.

## BOOK XIV

### CHAPTER 8

#### Cardinal Fesch's palace – My tasks

Cardinal Fesch had taken the Lancellotti Palace, quite close to the Tiber; I have since met, in 1828, Princess Lancellotti. I was allotted the highest story of the palace: on entering, such a host of fleas leapt about my legs that my white trousers turned quite black. The Abbé de Bonnevie and I cleaned up our residence as best we could. I thought I was back in my New Road kennel: that remembrance of my poverty did not displease me. Once established in this diplomatic office, I began issuing passports and carrying out similar important functions. My hand-writing was an obstacle to my talent, and Cardinal Fesch shrugged his shoulders when he saw my signature. I had almost nothing else to do in my aerial chamber than look across the roofs at some laundry-women who made signs at me from a neighboring house; an aspiring opera-singer, training his voice, drove me mad with his eternal scales; I was happy when a funeral passed to free me from my boredom! From the heights of my window I saw a young mother's cortege: she was carried, her face uncovered, between two lines of white-robed pilgrims; her newborn baby, also dead and wreathed in flowers, was laid at her feet.

I made a great mistake: not having been forewarned, I thought I ought to visit various notable people; I went, informally, to pay my respects to the previous King of Sardinia, who had abdicated. A terrible fuss was made over this unusual action; all the diplomats buttoned up tight about it. '*He is lost! He is lost!*' the carriers of the Pope's train and the *attachés* murmured, with the pleasure people kindly take in a man's misadventures, whoever he may be. There was not a diplomatic clod who did not think himself superior to me in all the elevation of his idiocy. There were high hopes that I was about to fall, though I was nobody and counted for nobody: no matter, somebody was falling, that was the pleasure of it all. In my simplicity, I had no doubt I had done wrong, and, as has happened since, I could not have cared a straw. Kings whom people thought I might have attached such great importance to, were only bringers of misfortune to my eyes. The tale of my appalling foolishness was sent from Rome to Paris: happily I had credit with Napoleon; what should have drowned me, saved me.

However, if at first glance, and after full consideration, becoming First Secretary of the Embassy under a Prince of the Church, and Napoleon's uncle, seemed something of note, it was nevertheless only as if I had been clerk to a prefecture. Among the problems which arose, I could find things to occupy myself, but I was not initiated into any mysteries. I applied myself conscientiously to the business of the chancery; but what was the point of wasting my time in details within the grasp of any clerk?

After my long walks, and my visits to the shores of the Tiber, I only found, to occupy me on my return, the Cardinal's parsimonious quibbles, the Bishop of Châlon's gentlemanly boasting; and the incredible lies of the future Bishop of Maroc, the Abbé Guillon, who profiting from a similarity of name which sounded like his own to the ear, claimed, after miraculously escaping the massacre of the Carmelite Convent, to have granted absolution to Madame de Lamballe, while in La Force. He boasted of being the author of Robespierre's address to the Supreme Being. I tried one day to get him to say he had been to Russia: he did not absolutely confess to it, but he did claim, modestly, to have spent several months in St Petersburg.

Monsieur de La Maisonfort, a man of hidden wit, had recourse to me, and soon Monsieur Bertin the Elder, proprietor of *Les Débats*, assisted me with his friendship in sad circumstances. Exiled to the island of Elba, by the man who returning from Elba in his turn drove him to Ghent, Monsieur Bertin had, in 1803, obtained from the republican Monsieur Briot whom I knew, permission to serve his exile in Italy. I visited the ruins of Rome with him and with him I watched Madame de Beaumont die; two things which have bound his life to mine. A critic of great taste, he, like his brother, gave me excellent advice regarding my work. He would have shown a true talent for words, if he had been called to the rostrum. A long-time legitimist, having undergone the experience of the Temple prison, and deportation to the Island of Elba, his principles, at heart, remained the same. I remained faithful to the friend of my difficult hours; all the political opinions in the world would not be worth the sacrifice of an hour of sincere friendship: suffice it that I am unmoved in my opinions, as I am attached to my memories.

Towards the middle of my stay in Rome, Princesse Borghèse arrived: I was charged with taking her some shoes from Paris. I was presented to her; she completed her toilette in front of me: the fresh pretty shoes which she slipped onto her feet were only required to touch this old earth for an instant.

In the end illness overtook me: it is a resource on which one can always rely.

--- Revised in December 1846



## BOOK XV

### CHAPTER 1

The year 1803 – Madame de Beaumont's manuscripts – The letters of Madame de Caud

Paris, 1837 (Revised the 22nd February 1845)

When I left France, we were quite blind to Madame de Beaumont's condition: she wept a great deal, and her will proved that she thought herself doomed. However, her friends, without sharing their fears, sought to reassure each other; they believed in the miraculous spa waters, followed by the effects of Italian sun; they separated and took different routes: their rendezvous was Rome.

Fragments written in Paris, at Mont Dore, and in Rome, by Madame de Beaumont, and found among her papers, show her state of mind.

*Paris.*

*'For several years, my health has worsened in a material way. Symptoms that I took as the signal to depart appeared, without my being prepared yet for departure. My delusions are increasing with the progress of my illness. I have experienced many examples of this singular weakness, and I see that they will do me no good. I have already given myself up to remedies as tedious as they are ineffectual, and, without doubt, I would not have the strength to protect myself from the cruel remedies with which they do not fail to torment those who must die of chest complaints. Like others, I will live in hope; in hope! Do I desire to live, then? My past life has been a series of misfortunes, my present life is full of trouble and agitation; spiritual peace has left me forever. My death would be a momentary sorrow for some, a benefit to others, and the greatest of blessings to me.'*

*This 21st Floréal, the 10th of May, the anniversary of the deaths of my mother and my brother:*

*'I shall perish the last, and most miserable!'*

*Oh, why have I not the courage to die? This illness, that I have had the weakness almost to fear, is arrested, and perhaps I am condemned to live for a long time yet: I feel though that I could die with joy:*

*'My days are scarcely worth the cost of a sigh to me.'*

*No one has more reason than I to rail against nature: in refusing me everything, she has yet given me a feeling for all I lack. There is never a moment when I cease to feel the weight of the total mediocrity to which I am condemned. I know that one's contentment and happiness are often achieved at the cost of that mediocrity of which I complain so bitterly; but in failing to grant me the gift of self-delusion nature has made a torment of it for me. I resemble a deposed being who cannot forget what she has lost, and has not the strength to regain it. This absolute lack of illusions, and consequently of ambition, creates disaster for me in a thousand ways. I judge myself as someone indifferent to me might judge me and I see my friends as they are. I only have value through my excess of kindness which is not vigorous enough to be appreciated or truly useful, and from which my impatient nature drains all the charm: it makes me sensitive to others' ills without granting me the means to alleviate them. However, I owe to it the small amount of true pleasure I have experienced in life; I owe to it especially my never having known envy, so common a characteristic of honest mediocrity.'*

Mont Dore.

*'I intended to reveal some details concerning myself; but weariness made the pen fall from my hand.*

*Everything painful and bitter in my situation would change to happiness, if I could be sure of quitting this life in a few months' time.*

*If I had the strength to put an end myself to my sorrows in the only way possible, I would not employ it: it would be to act contrary to my intentions, to grant too much recognition to my sufferings, and create too grievous a wound in a soul whom I have judged worthy of supporting me in my ills.*

Weeping, I entreat myself to take a path as harsh as it is indispensable. Charlotte Corday claimed that there is no course of action from which one does not derive more pleasure than the pain it has cost to decide upon; but she went off to die, while I may still live a long time. What will become of me? Where shall I hide myself? What grave shall I choose? How shall I prevent hope from penetrating me? What power will block its entry?

*To withdraw silently, to let myself be forgotten, to bury myself forever, such is the duty imposed on me and which I hope I have the courage to accomplish. If the cup is too bitter, once laid aside nothing compels me to drain it completely, and perhaps my life will quite simply not last as long as I fear.*

*If I had decided on my place of retreat, I feel I would be calmer; but my present difficulty adds to the difficulties arising from my weakness, and it would need something of the supernatural to act against it with force, to treat it with sufficient harshness as one would a violent and cruel enemy.'*

Rome, 28th October.

*'For ten months, I have not been free of suffering; for six, I have shown all the symptoms of consumption, and some in the last degree: the only things lacking are illusions and perhaps I even have a few of those!'*

Monsieur Joubert, frightened of that eagerness for death which tormented Madame de Beaumont, addressed these words to her in his Pensées: 'Love and respect life, if not for itself, then for your friends at least. In whatever state yours may be, I would always prefer to know you were occupied with stitching than unstitching.'

My sister, Lucile, wrote to Madame de Beaumont, at this time. I possess that correspondence, given into my care by death. Ancient poetry represents some Nereid or other as a flower drifting over an abyss: Lucile was that flower. In comparing her letters with the extracts quoted above, one is struck by the resemblance of spiritual melancholy, expressed in the differing language of these unhappy angels. When I consider that I have shared the society of such spirits, I am astonished I valued it so little. These pages written by two superior women, vanishing from the earth quite closely together, do not meet my gaze without bitterly affecting me:

At Lascardais, 30th July.

*'I was so delighted, Madame, to receive a letter from you at last, that I did not have time to enjoy the pleasure of reading it all at once: I broke off my reading to go and tell everyone in the château that I had just received your news, without reflecting that my excitement meant scarcely anything here, and that*

hardly anyone knew I was corresponding with you. Seeing myself surrounded by cold looks, I returned to my upstairs room, reconciling myself to being joyful alone. I set myself to finishing your letter, and though I have re-read it several times, to tell you the truth, Madame, I cannot comprehend all that it contains. The joy that I continually feel on seeing this letter that I so desired, detracts from the attention I should be giving it.

You are leaving, then, Madame? Once back at Mont Dore, do not go forgetting about your health; give it all your care, I beg you with all the tenderness of my heart. My brother tells me that he hopes to see you in Italy. Fate, like Nature, has been pleased to distinguish him from myself in a favorable way. At least, I will not yield to my brother the happiness of loving you: I will share it with him all my life. Ah, goodness, Madame, how weary and crushed my heart is! You do not know how beneficial your letters are to me, since they inspire me with disdain for my ills! The idea that you think of me, that I interest you, raises my spirits enormously. So write to me, Madame, so that I can maintain that idea, which is so essential to me.

I have not yet seen Monsieur Chênédollé; I desire his visit greatly. I will be able to talk with him about yourself, and Monsieur Joubert; that will be a great pleasure to me. Allow me again, Madame, to recommend your health to you, the poor state of which worries and concerns me endlessly. How can you not be mindful of yourself? You are so kind and dear to all; have the justice to include yourself in your generosity.

Lucile.'

2nd September.

'What you tell me of your health, Madame, alarms and saddens me; however I reassure myself by thinking of your youth, by considering that, though you are very delicate, you are full of life.

I am distressed that you find yourself in a region that displeases you. I would see you surrounded by those things which are essential to entertain and revive you. I hope that with returning health, you will reconcile yourself to the Auvergne; there is scarcely a place that cannot offer something beautiful to eyes such as yours. I am now living in Rennes; I find my isolation acceptable enough. I change my residence frequently, Madame, as you see; I seem like a displaced being on this earth: indeed, I have long regarded myself as a superfluous creation. I think, Madame, you have spoken of my sorrows and anxieties. At present, it is no longer a question of all that, I am enjoying an inward peace which it is no longer in anyone's power to disturb. Though I have reached the age I am, having through circumstances and taste lead a mostly solitary life, I knew nothing of the world: at last I achieved that gloomy knowledge. Happily, reflection came to my aid. I asked myself what was so formidable about this world, then, and in where it's worth resided, that which in itself could never be, for good or ill, more than an object of pity? Is it not true, Madame, that human judgement is as limited as the rest of our being, as fluid, and as unbelieving as it is ignorant? All this good or faulty reasoning has allowed me to put aside, without difficulty, the strange vestment with which I have been clothed: I find myself full of strength and sincerity; nothing more can trouble me. I work with all my powers to gain control of my life, in order to make it wholly depend upon myself.

Also consider, Madame, that I am not to be pitied too much, since my brother, the better part of me, is in a pleasant situation, and that I still have eyes to admire the beauties of nature, God to support me, and

*for refuge a heart filled with peace and sweet memories. If you continue to have the goodness, Madame, to write to me, that will prove a vast addition to my happiness.'*

The mystery of style, a mystery visible everywhere, and present nowhere; the revelation of a nature painfully blessed; the artlessness of a woman one might have thought in her first youth, and the humble simplicity of a genius unknown to itself, breathes through these letters, a great many of which I have passed over. Did Madame de Sévigné write to Madame de Grignan with a more grateful affection than Madame de Caud did to Madame de Beaumont? *Her tenderness had the power to take it upon itself to walk in step with that other.* My sister loved my friend with all the passion of the tomb, since she felt she was about to die. Lucile had never ceased to inhabit a spiritual Rochers; she was the daughter of her century and a Sévigné of solitude.

## BOOK XV

### CHAPTER 2

Madame de Beaumont's arrival in Rome – A letter from my sister

Paris, 1837

A letter from Monsieur Ballanche dated the 30th Fructidor (the 17th of September), told me of the pending arrival of Madame de Beaumont, who had travelled from Mont Dore to Lyons on her way to Italy. He told me not to fear the misfortune I dreaded, and that the patient's health appeared to be improving. Madame de Beaumont, reaching Milan, came upon Monsieur Bertin whom business affairs had summoned there: he had the kindness to take charge of the poor traveller, and escorted her to Florence where I had gone to meet her. I was shocked on seeing her; she had strength enough only to smile. After a few days' rest, we set out for Rome, travelling at walking pace to avoid jolting her. Madame de Beaumont received careful attention everywhere: this kindly woman attracted interest, so ill and forlorn, the only one left of all her family. The very maids at the inns gave way to gentle commiseration.

What I felt can be imagined: one has conducted friends to the grave, but they were mute, and no shadow of vague hope remained to render one's grief more poignant. I no longer saw the lovely countryside through which we passed; I had followed La Pérouse's road: what did Italy signify to me? I still found the climate too fierce, and if the wind blew a little, the breezes seemed like tempests to me.

At Terni, Madame de Beaumont wished to see the falls; after making the effort to lean on my arm, she sat down again, saying: '*We must let the waters go.*' I had rented a secluded house for her in Rome near the Piazza d'Espagna, at the foot of Monte Pincio; it had a little garden with espalier oranges, and a courtyard with a fig-tree. There I deposited the dying woman. It had been difficult for me to secure this retreat, since there is a prejudice in Rome against diseases of the chest, which are regarded as contagious.

At that period of social renewal, everything appertaining to the old monarchy was sought after: the Pope sent for news of Monsieur de Montmorin's daughter; Cardinal Consalvi and the members of the Sacred College followed His Holiness' example; Cardinal Fesch himself showed Madame de Beaumont, till the day of her death, marks of deference and respect which I would not have expected from him, and made me forget the wretched divisions of my first days in Rome. I had written to Monsieur Joubert concerning the anxieties with which I was tormented, before Madame de Beaumont's arrival: '*Our friend writes letters to me from Mont Dore,*' I told him, '*that break my heart: she says that she feels there is no more oil in the lamp; she speaks of the last tremors of her heart. Why have you left her to journey alone? Why have you not written to her? What will become of us if we lose her? Who will console us for her? We do not feel the worth of our friends until the moment when we are threatened with their loss. We are even mad enough when things are going well to imagine that we can distance ourselves from them with impunity: the heavens punish us for it; they remove them from us and we are terrified by the solitude it leaves around us. Pardon me, my dear Joubert; I feel my heart today is only twenty years old; this Italy has rejuvenated me; I love everything that is dear to me with the same force as in my youth. Sorrow is my element: I only find myself again when I am unhappy. My friends are of so rare a species at present, that merely the fear of seeing them taken from me freezes my blood. Forgive my lamentations: I am sure you are as unhappy as I am. Write to me, and write to that other unfortunate Breton too.*'

At first, Madame de Beaumont experienced some relief. The patient herself began to believe in her recovery. I had the satisfaction of believing, at least, that Madame de Beaumont would no longer leave me: I counted on taking her to Naples in the spring, and from there, sending in my resignation to the Foreign Minister. Monsieur d'Agincourt, that true philosopher, came to see the fragile bird of passage which had perched in Rome before leaving for an unknown land; Monsieur Boguet, already the most senior of our painters, presented himself. These reinforcements to hope sustained the patient, and soothed her with an illusion which in her heart's depths she no longer subscribed to. Letters, which were painful to read, arrived for me from all directions, expressing fear and hope. On the 4th of October, Lucile wrote to me from Rennes:

*'I started a letter to you the other day; I have just been searching for it in vain; I spoke to you there of Madame de Beaumont, and I complained of her silence in my regard. My friend, what a strange sad life I lead these many months! Also these words of the prophet revolve endlessly in my mind: 'The Lord will crown thee with suffering, and hurl thee away like a ball.' But let us leave my troubles and speak of your worries. I cannot convince myself they are well-founded: I always see Madame de Beaumont as full of life and youth, and almost non-material: nothing gloomy can fill my heart, on that subject. Heaven, which knows our feelings for her, will certainly preserve her. My friend, we will not lose her; I feel that certainty within me. I cheer myself by thinking that, by the time you receive my letter, your anxiety will have passed. Convey to her, for my part, all the true and tender interest I take in her; tell her that the memory of her is one of the loveliest things in life to me. Keep your promise and don't fail to give me news whenever you can. Ah, what a long space of time must pass before I receive a reply to this letter! How cruel a thing separation is! When will you tell me of your return to France? If you seek to delude me, you wrong me. In the midst of my sorrows, a sweet thought rises in me, that of your friendship and that I exist in your memory such as god has pleased to form me. My friend, I can no longer see any sure refuge for me on earth except your heart; I am a stranger and unknown to all the rest. Farewell, my poor brother! Will I see you again? That idea does not offer itself to me in a distinct enough manner. If you see me again, I fear lest you find me completely insane. Farewell, you to whom I owe so much! Farewell, my unmixed blessing! O memory of my happier days, can you not now lighten my sorrowful days a little?*

*I am not one of those who exhaust their grief in the moment of separation; each day adds to the sadness I feel due to your absence, and were you a hundred years in Rome, you could not come to the end of that sadness. In order to make the distance seem an illusion, I do not pass a day without reading a few pages of your works: I make every effort to believe I hear you speaking. The friendship I have for you is only natural; from childhood you have been my defender and my friend; all your life you have tried to shed your charm over mine; you have never caused me a tear, and have never made a friend who has not been a friend to me. My kind brother, heaven which has been pleased to toy with all my other joys, wishes me to find my happiness completely in you, and entrust myself to your heart. Send me news quickly of Madame de Beaumont. Address your letters for me to Mademoiselle Lamotte, since I do not know how long I shall be able to stay here. Since our last separation, I am always, in regard to my habitation, as if subject to a quicksand that sinks under my feet: it is surely the case that for those who do not know me, I must appear inexplicable; however I only vary outwardly, since the depths are forever the same.'*

The voice of a swan preparing to die was transmitted, through me, to a dying swan: I was the echo of those last ineffable tones!

## BOOK XV

### CHAPTER 3

A letter from Madame de Krüdner

Another, and quite different, letter from the above, but written by a woman who has enjoyed an extraordinary role, Madame de Krüdner, demonstrates the hold that Madame de Beaumont, without any great beauty, fame, power or wealth, exercised over other spirits.

‘Paris, 24th November 1803.

*I heard the day before yesterday from Monsieur Michaud, who has returned to Lyons, that Madame de Beaumont was in Rome, and that she was very, very ill: that is what he has said. I am deeply sorry to hear it; my nerves have felt it, and I have thought much of that charming woman, whom I have not known for long, but whom I truly love. How often I have wished for her happiness! How often, I have wished she might cross the Alps and find under Italian skies the sweet and profound emotions I have experienced there myself! Alas! Has she reached so delightful a country only to know sadness there and be exposed to dangers I dread! I do not know how to express to you how much the idea of it troubles me. Forgive me, if I am so absorbed in the matter, that I have not yet spoken of yourself, my dear Chateaubriand; you must know my sincere attachment to you, and in revealing to you the real interest that Madame de Beaumont inspires in me, it is in order to move you more than I would have been able to do by speaking about yourself. I have that sad spectacle before my eyes; I know the secret of grief, and my soul always stops short before those souls on whom nature inflicts the power to suffer more than others. I hoped that Madame de Beaumont might enjoy the gift she received, in being happier; I hoped she might find a modicum of health again given Italian sun and the pleasure of your company. Ah! Reassure me, speak to me; tell her I love her sincerely, that I pray for her. Has she had my letter written in response to hers at Clermont? Address your reply to Michaud: I only ask for a word, since I know, my dear Chateaubriand, how much you feel and suffer. I thought her better; I have not written to her; I was overwhelmed with tasks; but I thought of the pleasure she would gain from seeing you again, and I could imagine it. Tell me a little of how you are; trust in my friendship, in the interest I have avowed towards you always, and do not forget me.*

*Baronne Krudner.’*

## BOOK XV

### CHAPTER 4

#### The death of Madame de Beaumont

Paris, 1838

The improvement that the air of Rome had produced in Madame de Beaumont, did not last: the signs of an imminent collapse disappeared, it is true; but it seems that the final moment is always delayed in order to deceive us. On two or three occasions I attempted to take the patient for a drive; I tried hard to distract her, by remarking to her on the countryside and the sky: she no longer took an interest in anything. One day, I took her to the Coliseum; it was one of those October days such as one only sees in Rome. She managed to descend from the carriage, and went to sit on a stone, facing one of the altars placed at the perimeter of the building. She raised her eyes; and gazed slowly at those porticoes, dead themselves for so many years, which had seen so much death; the ruins were thick with briars and with columbines yellowed by autumn and bathed in light. The dying woman then lowered her eyes, little by little, to the arena, leaving the sun behind; she fixed them on the altar cross, and said to me: '*Let us go; I am cold.*' I took her home; she retired to bed and never rose again.

I was put in communication with the Comte de La Luzerne; I sent him from Rome, by each courier, a report on the health of his sister-in-law. When his uncle had been charged by Louis XVI with the diplomatic mission to London, he had taken my brother with him: André Chenier took part in that embassy.

The doctors whom I had gathered together again after our attempt to enjoy a drive, told me that a miracle alone could save Madame de Beaumont. She was taken with the idea that she would not survive the 2nd of November, *All Souls' Day*; then she remembered that one of her relatives, I do not know which, had died on the 4th of November. I told her that her imagination was disturbed; that she would discover the idleness of her fears; she replied, to console me: '*Oh! Yes, I shall live longer!*' She saw a few tears that I tried to conceal from her; she took my hand, and said: '*You are a child; were you not expecting this?*'

On the eve of her death, Thursday the 3rd of November, she seemed calmer. She spoke to me about the disposal of her fortune, and told me, in speaking of her will, that *everything was settled; but everything was yet to be done, and that she would have liked just two hours to see to it.* That evening, the doctor advised me that he felt obliged to warn the patient that it was time for her to think of setting her conscience in order: I had an instant of weakness; the fear of shortening, through a preparation for death, the few moments that Madame Beaumont still had to live, horrified me. I was angry with the doctor then begged him to at least wait until the following day.

My night was a cruel one, with the secret I held in my breast. The patient did not allow me to spend it in her room. I stayed outside, trembling at every noise I heard: when the door was opened a little, I saw the feeble glimmer of a dying light.

On Friday the 4th of November, I entered, followed by the doctor. Madame de Beaumont saw my agitation, and said: '*Why do you look like that? I have passed a good night.*' The doctor then affected to tell me out loud that he wished to see me in the adjoining room. I went out: when I returned, I no longer knew if I existed. Madame de Beaumont asked me what the doctor had wanted me for. I flung myself



down by her bed, dissolved in tears. She did not speak for a moment, looked at me, and said in a firm voice, as if she wanted to give me strength: *'I did not think that it would happen quite so quickly as this: go, I must say goodbye to you for a moment. Call the Abbé de Bonnevie.'*

The Abbé de Bonnevie, having obtained the relevant authority, came to Madame de Beaumont's house. She told him she had always possessed a profound religious sentiment at heart; but that the unheard-of misfortunes that had struck her during the Revolution had sometimes made her doubt the justice of Providence; that she was ready to admit her errors and commend herself to the eternal mercy; that she hoped the ills she had suffered in this life would shorten her expiation in the next. She made me a sign to retire, and remained alone with her confessor.

I saw him come out an hour afterwards, wiping his eyes, and saying that he had never heard such beautiful language, nor seen such heroism. They sent for the parish priest, to administer the Sacraments. I returned to Madame de Beaumont. On seeing me, she said: *'Well! Are you pleased with me?'* She was moved by what she deigned to call my *kindness* to her: ah, if at that moment I could have bought back one of her days by sacrificing all of mine, with what joy I would have done so! Madame de Beaumont's other friends, who were not present at this scene, at least only had to weep once: while, at the head of that bed of pain where a man hears his last hour strike, each of the dying woman's smiles gave me life and stole it from me as it faded. A terrible idea overwhelmed me: I realized that Madame de Beaumont had been unsure to this very last breath of the true affection I had for her: she did not cease from showing her surprise and seemed to be dying in both despair and delight. She had considered herself a burden on me, and had wished to depart to set me free.

The priest arrived at eleven: the room filled with that crowd of the curious and the idle that one cannot prevent from following a priest in Rome. Madame de Beaumont watched the formidable solemnity without the least sign of fear. We knelt, and the dying woman received both Communion and the Extreme Unction. When everyone had gone, she made me sit on the edge of her bed and talked to me for half an hour about my work and my plans with the greatest nobility of spirit and the most touching friendship; she urged me above all to be close to Madame de Chateaubriand and Monsieur Joubert; but would Monsieur Joubert go on living?

She begged me to open the window, because she felt stifled. A ray of sunlight lit her bed and seemed to re-kindle her. Then she reminded me of her idea of retiring to the countryside, which we had sometimes talked of together, and she began to cry.

Between two and three in the afternoon, Madame de Beaumont, asked Madame Saint-Germain, an old Spanish lady's-maid who served her with affection worthy of so good a mistress, to move her to another bed: the doctor opposed this for fear that Madame de Beaumont might die during the transfer. Then she told me she felt the approach of the death-pang. Suddenly, she flung back the coverlet, held out her hand to me, and pressed mine convulsively; her gaze wandering from side to side. With her free hand, she made signs to someone she saw at the foot of the bed; then, returning her hand to her breast she said: *'It is there!'* Dismayed, I asked her if she recognized me: the ghost of a smile appeared amidst her distraction; she gave me a little nod of the head; her speech was no longer with this world. The convulsions lasted only a few minutes. We supported her in our arms, the doctor, the nurse, and I: one of my hands rested on her heart which throbbed against her fragile bones; it beat rapidly like a clock unwinding, its chain broken. Oh, moment of horror and fear, I felt it stop! We laid on her pillow the woman who had found

peace; her head drooped. A few locks of her hair, unwound, fell over her brow; her eyes were closed, eternal night had descended. The doctor held a mirror and a candle to the mouth of the traveller; the mirror was not clouded by a breath of life and the candle remained unmoving. All was over.

BOOK XV  
CHAPTER 5  
The Funeral

Paris

Ordinarily, those who weep can indulge their tears in peace, others being charged with attending to the requirements of religion: as the representative of France, on behalf of the Cardinal and Minister who was then absent; and as the sole friend of Monsieur de Montmorin's daughter, and responsible to her family, I was obliged to see to everything: I had to select the place of burial, arrange the size and depth of the grave, order the shroud, and give the carpenter the dimensions of the coffin.

Two monks watched by this coffin, which was to be carried to San Luigi dei Francesi. One of these fathers was from the Auvergne and a native of Montmorin itself. Madame de Beaumont had requested to be buried in a piece of cloth that her brother Auguste, who alone had not died on the scaffold, had sent her from Mauritius. This cloth was not in Rome; we could only find a fragment of it which she carried everywhere. Madame Saint-Germain fastened this strip around the body with a cornelian locket containing a piece of Monsieur de Montmorin's hair. The French ecclesiastics were invited; Princess Borghèse lent her family hearse; Cardinal Fesch had left orders, in the event of the only too predictable occurrence, to send his livery and his carriages. On Saturday the 5th of November at seven in the evening, by torchlight in the midst of a large crowd, Madame de Beaumont passed along the road by which we all must pass. On Sunday the 6th of November, the Funeral Mass was celebrated. The event would have been less French in Paris than it was at Rome. That religious architecture, which bears among its ornamentation the arms and inscriptions of our ancient land; those tombs on which the names of some of the most historic families of our annals are carved; that church, under the protection of a great saint, a great king, and a great man, all that gave no consolation, but it gave honor to misfortune. I wished the last offshoot of a once high family to find some support, at least, in my obscure attachment, and the friendship not be lacking like the fortune.

The people of Rome, accustomed to foreigners, treat them as brothers and sisters. Madame de Beaumont has left on that soil, hospitable to the dead, a pious memory; they still remember her: I have seen Leo XII pray at her tomb. In 1828, I visited the monument of her who was the soul of a vanished society; the sound of my footsteps around that mute monument, in a solitary church, was a warning to me. *'I shall love you always,'* says the Greek epitaph, *'but you, among the dead, drink not, I beg you, of that cup which brings forgetfulness of former friends.'*

## BOOK XV

### CHAPTER 6

The year 1803: Letters from Monsieur Chênédollé, Monsieur de Fontanes,  
Monsieur Necker, and Madame de Staël

Paris, 1838

If one considers on the scale of public events the calamities of private life, those calamities ought scarcely to occupy a word in a set of *Memoirs*. Who has not lost a friend? Who has not seen one die? Who has not had to recall a similar scene of mourning? The reflection is just, however none of us are cured of retelling our own adventures; on the ship that carries them, the sailors are like a family ashore, who are of interest to and mutually support each other. Every man encloses within himself a world apart, a stranger to the laws and common fate of the centuries. It is, moreover, an error to believe that revolutions, celebrated events, and resounding catastrophes, are the only splendors unique to our nature: one by one we all labor at the links of common history and the mortal universe is in God's eyes formed of all those individual existences.

In gathering together these regrets around Madame de Beaumont's ashes, I only seek to lay on her grave the wreaths destined for it.

#### A LETTER FROM MONSIEUR CHÊNEDOLLÉ

*'You cannot doubt, my dear unfortunate friend, how much I share in your affliction. My grief is not as great as yours, since that is impossible; but I am most profoundly affected by this loss, and it comes to darken yet further this life, which for a long time has been no more than a burden to me. So passes then and effaces itself from earth all that is good, kind and sensitive. My poor friend, hasten to return to France; come and seek solace with your old friend. You know how I love you: do come.*

*I was full of the greatest anxiety about you; I have not received news of you for more than three months, and three letters of mine remain without reply. Did you receive them? Madame de Caud suddenly stopped writing to me, two months ago. It has caused me mortal pain, and yet I am not aware of having done any wrong to her with which I could reproach myself. But whatever she may do, it cannot affect the lifetime's tender friendship and respect I have vowed for her. Fontanes and Joubert have also stopped writing to me; so, all those I love seem to be united together in forgetting me. Do not forget me, oh you, my kind friend, that in this world of tears one heart yet might remain on which I might count! Farewell! I embrace you, while weeping. Be certain, my kind friend, that I feel your loss as one must feel it.*

*23rd November, 1803.'*

#### A LETTER FROM MONSIEUR DE FONTANES

*'I share all your regrets, my dear friend: I feel the sadness of your circumstances. To die so young and after surviving all her family! But, at least, that fascinating and unfortunate woman did not lack the aid and tokens of friendship. Her memory will live in hearts worthy of her. I have passed to Monsieur de La Luzerne the touching description destined for him. Old Saint-Germain, your friend's manservant, was charged with bringing it. That good servant has made me weep by speaking about his mistress. I have*

*told him that he has been left a legacy of ten thousand francs; but he was not interested in it for a moment. If it were possible to talk of business in such dismal circumstances, I would tell you that it was quite natural to leave you at least the usufruct of a property which is to act as remote and almost unknown collateral.’ (Monsieur de Fontanes’ friendship goes far too far; Madame de Beaumont judged me better; she knew without doubt that if she left me her fortune, I would not accept it.) ‘I approve of your conduct; I know your delicacy; but I cannot show the same disinterestedness towards my friend as he shows towards himself. I swear that such self-forgetfulness astonishes and pains me. Madame de Beaumont on her death-bed spoke to you, with the eloquence of parting words, of the future and your destiny. Her voice must have greater force than mine. But did she counsel you to renounce eight to twelve thousand francs of your appointment monies when your path was being cleared of its first thorns? Can you be rushing into an even more important step, my dear friend? You cannot doubt the great pleasure I would have in seeing you again. If I consulted only my own happiness, I would say to you: Come at once. But your interests are as dear to me as mine, and I fail to see resources imminent enough to compensate you for advantages which you relinquish voluntarily. I know that your talent, name and efforts will never leave you at the mercy of your fundamental needs; but I see more of glory than of wealth in them. Your education and your habits demand a modicum of expenditure. Fame alone is not sufficient for life’s wants and that wretched art of beef and two vegetables comes before all others if you wish to live in tranquility and independence. I keep hoping that nothing will persuade you to seek your fortune among foreigners. Ah, my friend, you can be sure that after the first welcome they will still prove to be worth less than your compatriots. If your dying friend had considered all this, her last moments would have been troubled a little by them; but I trust that at the foot of her grave you will find counsel and superior insight in all that your remaining friends can grant you. That kindly woman loved you: she will advise you well. Her memory and your heart will guide you surely: I am no longer anxious if you listen to both. Farewell, my dear friend, I embrace you tenderly.’*

Monsieur Necker wrote me the only letter I ever received from him. I had been a witness to the joy at Court on the dismissal of this Minister, whose honest opinions contributed to the overthrow of the monarchy. He had been a colleague of Monsieur de Montmorin. Monsieur Necker was soon to die in the place from which his letter is dated: lacking Madame de Staël by his side, he himself found a few tears for his daughter’s friend:

#### A LETTER FROM MONSIEUR NECKER

*‘My daughter, Sir, on setting out for Germany begged me to open any large packets which might be addressed to her, in order to decide it if was worth the trouble of sending them on to her by post: that is the reason that I am advised, before she is, of Madame de Beaumont’s death. I have sent your letter on to Frankfurt, Sir, from where it will probably be transmitted further, perhaps to Weimar or Berlin. Do not be surprised then, Sir, if you do not receive Madame de Staël’s reply as rapidly as you have right to expect. You may indeed be sure, Sir, of the grief Madame de Staël will experience in learning of the loss of a friend of whom I have always heard her speak with profound sentiment. I associate myself with her pain, I associate myself with yours, Sir, and I share a part of it myself especially, when I think of the unfortunate fate of my friend Monsieur de Montmorin’s whole family.*

*I see that you are on the verge of quitting Rome, Sir, in order to return to France; I hope you will make your way via Geneva, where I will be spending the winter. I would be very willing to do you the honors of*

*a town where you are already known by reputation. But where are you not so, Sir? Your last work, sparkling with incomparable beauties, is in the hands of all those who love to read.*

*I have the honor to present you, Sir, with assurances and the homage of my most distinguished feelings.*

NECKER.

*Coppet, 27th November 1803.'*

LETTER FROM MADAME DE STAËL

*'Frankfurt, 3rd December 1803.*

*'Oh, my dear Francis, what sorrow seized me on receiving your letter! Already yesterday, this dreadful news sprung at me from the newspaper, and your heart-rending description will be engraved on my heart forever in letters of blood. How can you speak to me, how can you, of differing opinions on religion, and priests? Are there two opinions where there is only one sentiment? I could not read your description except through the saddest of tears. My dear Francis, recall the time when you felt greater friendship for me; do not forget that period especially when my whole heart was attracted towards you, and tell yourself that those feelings, more tender, deeper than ever for you, exist in the depths of my soul. I loved; I admired Madame de Beaumont's character: I have never known anyone more generous, more grateful; more passionately sensitive. Ever since I entered society, I have not ceased to communicate with her, and I always felt that even in the midst of our differences I was bound to her by every tie. My dear Francis, keep a place for me in your life. I admire you, I love you; I loved her whom you regret. I am a devoted friend; I will be a sister to you. More than ever, I must give way to your opinions: Mathieu who shares them, has been an angel to me in the last trouble I experienced. Give me a new reason to consider them; allow me to be useful or kind to you in some way. Have they written to tell you that I have been exiled forty leagues from Paris? I have taken the opportunity to make a tour of Germany; but, in the spring, I will return, to Paris itself if my exile is revoked, or close to Paris, or Geneva. Let us be reunited somehow or other. Do you not feel that my spirit and soul understand yours, and do you not sense how we resemble one another, despite the differences? Monsieur de Humboldt wrote a letter to me, a few days ago, in which he spoke of your work with a degree of admiration that must flatter you coming from a man of his worth and opinions. But what am I doing speaking to you of your success at such a moment? Yet, she loved that success; she attached her glory to it. Continue to render illustrious that which she loved so. Farewell, my dear François, I will write to you from Weimar in Saxony. Reply to me, at Messieurs Desport, my bankers. What heart-rending words there are in your description! And that commitment to look after poor Saint-Germain; you shall bring him to my house sometime.*

*Farewell, tenderly: sorrowfully farewell.*

*N. DE STAËL.'*

This prompt letter, swift in its affection, written by an illustrious woman, redoubled my emotion. Madame de Beaumont would have been happy at that moment, if heaven had allowed her to be re-born! But our attachments, which gain us a hearing among the dead, lack the power to free them: when Lazarus rose from the grave, his hands and feet were tied with bandages and his face covered by a shroud: now, friendship can only say, as Christ did to Martha and Mary: 'Loose him, and let him go.'

Those who consoled me are also gone, and they ask of me the regrets for themselves that they showed for another.

## BOOK XV

### CHAPTER 7

The years 1803 and 1804: The first idea of my Memoirs – I am named Minister of France for the Valais –  
Departure from Rome

Paris, 1838

I was determined to quit that diplomatic career where human tragedy had become blended with mediocrity of effort and vile political worries. No one knows what desolation of spirit is, unless they have been left alone to wander among places once inhabited by someone who adorned their life: you seek for her and find her not; she speaks to you, you smile, you are with her; everything she has moved or touched conjures her image; there is only a transparent veil between you, yet so heavy you cannot lift it. The memory of the first friend whom you have left behind on the way is cruel; for, if your days are prolonged, you will necessarily have other losses: those dead who follow attach themselves to the first, and you will grieve together in the one person for all those you have successively lost.

While I was setting in train lengthy arrangements in far-off France, I remained alone in the ruins of Rome. On my first outing, the aspects seemed changed, I failed to recognize the trees, monuments, and sky; I wandered through the Campagne, along the arches of the aqueducts, as I once did beneath the arbors of the New World. I returned to the eternal City, which had now added one more extinguished life to so many lost existences. By dint of travelling the solitudes of the Tiber, they were so deeply engraved on my memory, that I reproduced them correctly enough in my letter to Monsieur de Fontanes: '*If a traveller is unhappy,*' I said, '*if he has mingled the ashes of a loved one with the ashes of the famous, with what charm will he not pass from Cecilia Metella's tomb to the grave of an unfortunate woman!*'

It was in Rome too, that I had the first idea of writing the *Mémoires de ma vie*; I find here a few lines written at hazard, in which I can decipher these few words: '*Having wandered the earth, and spent the best years of my youth far from my country, and suffered more or less all that a man can suffer, including hunger, I returned to Paris in 1800.*'

In a letter to Monsieur Joubert, I sketched out my plan thus:

*'My sole happiness is to snatch a few hours and occupy myself with a work which alone can ease my suffering: namely the Mémoires de ma vie. Rome will appear in them: It is only in that way that I can speak of Rome in future. Don't worry; they will not be confessions that will pain my friends: if I achieve anything in future, my friends will be there with names as fine as they are respectable. No more shall I reveal to posterity the details of my frailties; I will only say those things about myself that suit my dignity as a human being, and, I dare say, the nobility of my heart. One must reveal to the world only what is beautiful; it is not a deception before God to only show whatever of one's life can inspire noble and generous feelings in our fellow men. It is not that, ultimately, I have anything to hide; I have not driven a serving girl away because of a stolen ribbon, nor abandoned my friend dying in the street, nor dishonored the woman who welcomed me, nor placed my bastard offspring in the Foundlings Hospital, but I have my frailties, my despondencies of heart; one groan of mine is enough to comprehend the common miseries of the world, fitted to remain behind the veil. What does society gain by reproducing those wounds we see everywhere? There is no lack of examples if one wishes to triumph over poor human nature.'*



In the plan that I sketched out, I passed over my family, my childhood, my youth, my travels and my exile: yet those are the passages where I am perhaps shown to most advantage.

I lived like a cheerful slave: accustomed to setting chains on his freedom, he has no idea what to do with his leisure, when his chains are broken. When I wanted to give myself up to work, a face would appear before me, and I could not turn my eyes away: only religion gained my attention through its seriousness and the thoughts of a superior nature that it suggested to me.

Still, in occupying myself with the idea of writing my *Memoirs*, I felt the value that the ancients attached to the importance of their name; perhaps there is a touching reality in perpetuating memories that one might let go as they pass. Perhaps, for the great men of antiquity, that idea of an immortal existence amidst the human race took the place for them of that immortality of the soul which remained a problem to them. If fame is nothing much as it appertains to us, it must nevertheless be admitted that it is a fine privilege, deriving from the friendship of genius, to grant imperishable existence to all it has loved.

I began a commentary on several books of the Bible beginning with *Genesis*. On the verses: *And the Lord God said, behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil, and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever*; I remarked on the Creator's great irony: *Behold the man is become as one of us*, etc. *Lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life*. Why? Because he has now tasted the fruit of science and knows goodness from evil; he is now overwhelmed with troubles; *so, he shall not live forever*: what a kindness of God is death!

Prayers commenced, some for *inquietude of soul*, others *to fortify against the prosperity of the spiteful*: I tried to call back my thoughts, wandering far from me, to a center of repose.

Since God did not intend my life to end there, reserving it for lengthy trials, the storms that had arisen calmed once more. Suddenly the *Cardinal*, and Ambassador, altered his manner towards me: I had a discussion with him, and declared to him my decision to withdraw from office. He opposed it: he claimed that my resignation, at that time, would carry a suggestion of disgrace; that I would give pleasure to my enemies, and *the First Consul* would be angered, which would prevent me from enjoying my place of retirement in tranquility. He suggested I go and spend a fortnight, or even a month, at Naples.

At this very moment, the Russians sounded me out as to whether I would accept the position of Governorship of a Grand-Duchy; it might have been just as good as choosing to sacrifice the remainder of my life to the cause of *Henri V*.

While I hovered between a thousand courses of action, I received the news that the First Consul had nominated me as *Minister to the Valais*. Initially he was angered by those denunciations of me; but he regained his temper and understood that I was of that race which is useless unless it is in the foreground, that it was no use subordinating me to others, or it would be better to have no dealings with me at all. There were no places vacant; he created one, and selecting it as suitable for my instinct for solitude and independence, he set me down in the Alps; he gave me a Catholic republic with a wealth of mountain streams; the Rhône and our soldiers met at my feet, the former descending towards France, the latter climbing towards Italy, the Simplon opened its daring path before me. The Consul granted me as much time as I would have wished to travel in Italy, and *Madame Bacciochi* let me know via *Fontanes* that the first significant Embassy available was reserved for me. I therefore obtained this first diplomatic triumph

without expecting or wishing it: it is true that there was a fine intellect acting as Head of State, which did not wish to abandon to office intrigue another intellect, which it felt was all too disposed to separate itself from the power nexus.

That comment is even truer in that [Cardinal Fesch](#), to whom I grant in my *Memoirs* a justice he might not have expected, had sent two malevolent dispatches to Paris, almost at the very moment when his manner to me had become most obliging after the death of Madame de Beaumont. Was his true opinion reflected in his conversations, during which he agreed to my going to Naples, or in his diplomatic missives? The conversations and missives were of the same date, and contradictory. It was entirely within my hands to remedy Monsieur le Cardinal's inconsistency, by erasing all trace of the reports concerning myself: it would have been sufficient to remove the Ambassador's ranting from the files, while I was Minister for Foreign Affairs: I would only have been doing what [Monsieur de Talleyrand](#) used to do with regard to his correspondence with the Emperor. I did not consider I had the right to use my power for my own benefit. If anyone chances to look for those documents again, they will be found in their proper place. That this manner of acting would have been duplicitous, I well knew; but in order not to credit me with the merit of a virtue I did not show, one should understand that this respect for my detractors' correspondence owed more to contempt than to generosity. In the Embassy archive in Berlin I found offensive letters from [Monsieur le Marquis de Bonnay](#) concerning myself, as well: far from letting them lie, I made them known.

[Monsieur le Cardinal Fesch](#) was no more reserved about poor [Abbé Guillon](#) (the Bishop of Maroc): he was marked down as a Russian agent. Bonaparte considered [Monsieur Lainé](#) *an agent of England*: it was in that way, from such gossip, that [the great man](#) acquired the unpleasant habit of initiating police reports. But was nothing said about Monsieur Fesch himself? What did his own family make of [him](#)? The [Cardinal de Clermont-Tonnerre](#) was in Rome, as I was, in 1803; what did he *not* say concerning Napoleon's [uncle](#)? I have the letters.

As for the rest, to whom then do these things matter, buried as they have been for forty years in worm-eaten files? Only one of the actors remains from that *époque*, Bonaparte. All we who pretend to live are already dead: who reads an insect's name in the feeble light that it sometimes sheds behind it in its crawling?

Monsieur le Cardinal Fesch has met me since, as ambassador to [Leo XII](#); he gave me proofs of his esteem: for my part, I determined to avoid him and respect him. It is natural moreover that I should have been judged with a severity that I never spare myself. It is all past and done: I would not even recognize the writing of those who, in 1803, served as official or unofficial secretaries to Monsieur le Cardinal Fesch.

I left for Naples: there I began a year without Madame de Beaumont; a year of her absence, to be followed by so many others! I have never returned to Naples since that time (except for 1828, when I was at the gates of that same city, which I promised to visit with Madame de Chateaubriand). The orange trees were heavy with fruit, and the myrtles covered with flowers. [Baiae](#), the *Elysian Fields*, and the sea, were enchantments that I could no longer tell anyone of. I have described the Bay of Naples in *Les Martyrs*. I climbed Vesuvius and descended into its crater. I plagiarized myself: I was acting out a scene from *René*.

At Pompeii, they showed me a skeleton in chains, and ill-formed Latin words, daubed on the walls by soldiers. I returned to Rome. Canova granted me entry to his studio, while he was working on the statue of a nymph. Elsewhere the marble tomb figures which I had ordered were already full of expression. I had been to pray over the ashes from the bed of Saint Louis, and left for Paris on the 21st of January 1804, another inauspicious day.

Behold a prodigious sorrow: thirty five years have passed since the date of those events. Did my grief flatter itself, in those distant days, that the tie which had been broken would be my last tie? And yet how quickly I have, not forgotten, but replaced what was dear to me! So a man passes from frailty to frailty. While he is young and his life is before him he has the shadow of an excuse; but when he is yoked to it and dragging it painfully behind him how can he be excused? The poverty of our nature is so great, that in our weakness and fickleness, we can only employ the words we have already used in our former relationships to expression our most recent affections. They are words however that should only serve us once: one profanes them by repeating them. Friendships deserted and betrayed reproach us for the new associations we engage in; our days accuse one another: our life is a perpetual blush of shame, because it is an ongoing error.

- End of Book XV

## BOOK XVI

### CHAPTER 1

The year 1804 – The Valais Republic – A visit to the Tuileries Palace – The Hôtel de Montmorin – I hear of the death of the Duc d'Enghien – I hand in my resignation

Paris, 1838 (Revised the 22nd February 1845)

It not being my intention to remain in Paris, I stayed at the Hôtel de France, in the Rue de Beaune, where Madame de Chateaubriand was to join me, to travel with me to the Valais. My former circle, already half-scattered, had broken the ties which bound it.

Bonaparte marched on towards Empire; his genius rose to meet escalating events: he could, like gunpowder exploding, carry a world before him; already vast, and yet not considering himself to have attained his peak, his powers tormented him; he was feeling his way, he appeared to be searching for his path: when I arrived in Paris, it lay via Pichegru and Moreau: with a mean motivation he had consented to accept them as rivals: Moreau, Pichegru and Georges Cadoudal, who was greatly their superior, were arrested.

This mundane series of intrigues that one meets in all the affairs of life, corresponded to nothing in my nature, and I was happy to flee into the mountains.

The town Council of Sion wrote to me. The *naïveté* of this dispatch makes it for me a document to treasure; I entered politics through religion: *Le Génie du Christianisme* opened doors for me.

*REPUBLIC OF VALAIS*

*Sion, the 20th of February 1804.*

*THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF SION,*

*To Monsieur Chateaubriand,*

*Secretary to the Legation of the French Republic in Rome.*

*'Sir,*

*By an official letter, from our Grand Bailiff, we have been apprised of your appointment to the position of Minister of France to our Republic. We hasten to testify to you the enormous pleasure this choice has given us. We see in this nomination a precious token of the First Consul's benevolence towards our Republic, and we congratulate ourselves on the honor of welcoming you within our walls: we derive from it the happiest auguries of advantage to our country and our town. To bear witness to you of our feelings, we have decided to have temporary accommodation prepared for you, worthy to receive you, equipped with furniture and effects suitable for your use, inasmuch as the location and circumstances permit, expecting that you will be making your own arrangements at your own convenience.*

*Please accept this offer, Sir, as a proof of our sincere intent to honor the French Government in the person of its employee, the choice of whom must give particular pleasure to a religious nation. We beg you to give us sufficient notice of your arrival in our town.*

*Accept, Sir, assurances of our respectful consideration.*

*The President of the Council of the town of Sion.*

*DE RIEDMATTEN.*

*For the Town Council:*

*The Secretary of the Council,*

*DE TORRENTE.’*

Two days before the 21st of March, I dressed formally to go and take leave of Bonaparte at the Tuileries; I had not seen him since the time when he had spoken to me at Lucien’s. The gallery in which he was receiving visits was full; he was accompanied by Murat and a principal aide-de-camp; he strode along almost without stopping. As he reached me, I was struck by the alteration in his face: his cheeks were hollow and livid, his eyes burning, his complexion pale and blotchy; his expression sombre and fierce. The attraction he had previously possessed for me, ceased; instead of standing in his path, I made a movement as if to avoid him. He threw me a glance as if he was trying to recognize me, took a few paces towards me, then turned and walked away. Had I seemed to him like a warning? His aide-de-camp noticed me; when the crowd hid me, this aide-de-camp tried to catch sight of me between the people standing in front of me, and redirected the Consul towards me. This game continued for about a quarter of an hour, I forever retreating, Napoleon forever following me unawares. I have never known what motivated the aide-de-camp. Did he take me for a suspicious person whom he did not know? If he knew who I was, did he want to press Bonaparte into speaking to me? Whatever may have been the reason, Napoleon went on into another room. Satisfied at having done my duty by presenting myself at the Tuileries, I withdrew. Given the joy I always felt at leaving palaces, it is clear I was never made for entering them.

Returning to the Hôtel de France, I told my friends: ‘*Something strange must be happening that we know nothing of, since Bonaparte cannot have changed as much as this without being ill.*’ Monsieur Bourrienne knew of my singular prescience, he has only confused the dates: here is his comment: ‘*On returning from seeing the First Consul, Monsieur de Chateaubriand told his friends that he had noticed a great change in the First Consul, and something sinister in his glance.*’

Yes, I noticed it: a superior intelligence does not produce evil without pain, because it is not its natural fruit, and it ought not to bear it.

Two days later, on the 21st March, I rose early, for the sake of a memory sad and dear to me. Monsieur de Montmorin had built himself a house at the corner of the Rue Plumet, on the new Boulevard des Invalides. In the garden of this house, which was sold during the Revolution, Madame de Beaumont, when little more than a child, had planted a cypress tree, which she had occasionally taken pleasure in showing me as we passed: it was to this cypress, whose origin and history I alone knew, that I was going, to say my farewells. It still exists, but is languishing and scarcely rises as far as the window beneath which her vanished hand used to tend it. I can distinguish that poor tree from among three or four others of the same species; it seems to know me and rejoice when I approach; melancholy breezes bend its

yellowed head somewhat towards me, and it murmurs at the window of the deserted room: a mysterious understanding between us, that will cease when one or the other of us falls.

My pious tribute made, I descended the Boulevard, crossed the Esplanade des Invalides, the Pont Louis XVI and the Tuileries Gardens, which I left by the gate, near the Pavillon Marsan, which now leads into the Rue de Rivoli. There, between eleven and twelve o'clock, I heard a man and a woman shouting out official news; passers-by were stopping, suddenly petrified at the words: '*Verdict of the special military commission convened at Vincennes, sentencing to death THE MAN NAMED LOUIS-ANTOINE-HENRI DE BOURBON, BORN THE 2ND AUGUST 1772 AT CHANTILLY.*'

This cry in the street struck me like a bolt of lightning; it changed my life, as it changed that of Napoleon. I went home; I said to Madame de Chateaubriand: '*The Duc d'Enghien has just been shot.*' I sat at the table, and began writing my letter of resignation. Madame de Chateaubriand did not oppose my decision, and with great courage watched me write it. She was not deceived as to the risk: Generals Moreau and Cadoudal were being tried; the lion had tasted blood, this was not the moment to annoy him.

Monsieur Clausel de Coussergues arrived at this juncture; he too had heard the verdict shouted out. He found me pen in hand; my letter, some angry phrases of which he made me omit, out of consideration for Madame de Chateaubriand, was dispatched; it was addressed to the Foreign Minister. The wording mattered little: the expression of my opinion, and my crime lay in the fact of my resignation: Bonaparte would make no mistake there. Madame Bacciochi shrieked loudly when she learned of what she called my *defection*; she sent for me and reproached me in a vigorous manner. Monsieur de Fontanes, was almost mad with fear initially, and then acted with fearless friendship; he regarded me as already as good as executed, along with everyone attached to me. For several days, my friends were afraid of my being taken away by the police; they appeared at my house from time to time, always trembling as they reached the porter's lodge. Monsieur Pasquier came to embrace me the day after my resignation, saying how happy a thing it was to have such a friend. He stayed quite some considerable time indulging in an honorable and impartial analysis of position and power.

Nevertheless, these expressions of sympathy, which swept us along in their praise of a generous action, ceased. I had accepted, because of religion, an appointment outside France, an appointment conferred on me by a powerful genius, who had conquered anarchy, a leader who had emerged on the basis of popular principle, the *consul* of a *republic*, and not a king continuing the line of a usurped monarchy; thus, I was isolated in my opinions, because I was strictly logical in my actions; I resigned when the conditions to which I could subscribe altered; yet, immediately the hero turned murderer, others hastened into his ante-chambers. Six months after the 21st March, one might have thought there had only been one opinion in the upper echelons of society, except for a few nasty jibes allowed behind closed doors. Those who had *fallen* claimed to have been *forced out*, and people said that only those of significant lineage or great importance had been *forced out*, and that each, as proof of their importance or their lineage, had ensured they would be *forced out* by dint of asking for it to happen.

Those, who had applauded my action most, distanced themselves; my presence was a reproach to them: prudent men find those who yield to a point of honor imprudent. There are times when nobility of soul is a positive handicap; no one understands it; it is treated as proof of limited intellect, a result of prejudice, a whim, a fault which prevents you from judging correctly; an imbecility that is worthy perhaps, they might say, but still a stupid helotism. What intelligence is to be found in seeing nothing, in living divorced from

the march of the century, the swirl of ideas, the transformation of our way of life, the progress of society? Is it not a deplorable mistake to attach an importance to events which they do not possess? Barricaded within your narrow principles, lacking in wit as well as judgement, you are like a man lodged in the rear of a building, looking out on only a tiny courtyard, unaware of what is passing in the street, and what the noises are outside. See how a little independence cuts you down to size, object of pity to mediocrities that you are: as for great spirits with their affected pride and sublime eyes, *oculos sublimes*, their merciful disdain forgives you because they know that you *cannot understand*. So I retreated humbly into my literary career; a poor Pindar destined in the first Olympian to sing of *the excellence of water*, leaving wine to happier men.

Friendship heartily requited Monsieur de Fontanes; Madame Bacciochi kindly placed herself between her brother's anger and my decision; Monsieur de Talleyrand, through indifference or calculation, kept my letter of resignation for several days before mentioning it: when he told Bonaparte of it, the latter had already spent time in reflection. Receiving from me the only direct token of blame, from an honest man who did not hesitate to defy him, he only pronounced these two words: '*That's fine.*' Later he said to his sister: '*You were quite fearful for your friend.*' Long afterwards, in conversation with Monsieur de Fontanes, he confessed to him that my resignation was one of the things that most impressed him. Monsieur de Talleyrand had an official letter sent to me, in which he reproached me graciously for depriving his department of my talents and services. I returned the cost of my installation, and everything was over it would seem. But by daring to turn my back on Bonaparte, I had set myself on a par with him, and he was opposed to me in all perfidy, as I was opposed to him in all loyalty. Until he fell, he held a sword suspended above my head; he turned to me sometimes through a natural inclination, and tried to engulf me in his fatal prosperity; sometimes I inclined towards him through the admiration with which he inspired me, through the idea that I was assisting in a social transformation, not merely a change of dynasty: but antipathetic despite our many empathies, our two natures reasserted themselves, and if he would willingly have had me shot, I would have felt no great compunction in killing him.

Death makes or unmakes a great man; it halts him on the step from which he was about to descend, or at the level from which he was about to ascend: it represents a destiny accomplished or foregone; in the first case, one is concerned with what has happened; in the second with conjectures about what might have happened.

If I had been carrying out an exercise with a view to my long term ambitions, I would have been in error. Charles X only learnt in Prague of what I had done in 1804: he had reclaimed the monarchy. '*Chateaubriand,*' he asked me in the Castle of Hradschin, '*did you serve Bonaparte? – Yes, Sire – Did you resign on the death of Monsieur le Duc d'Enghien? – Yes, Sire.*' Misfortune instructs or erases the memory. I have told you how, once, in London, having taken refuge with Monsieur de Fontanes in a drive-way during a shower, Monsieur le Duc de Bourbon happened to share the same shelter: in France, his gallant father and himself, who thanked so politely whoever wrote the funeral oration for Monsieur le Duc d'Enghien, gave me not a thought: they also doubtless were ignorant of my action: it is true that I had never spoken of it to them.

BOOK XVI  
CHAPTER 2  
The Death of the Duc d'Enghien

Chantilly, November 1837

Like a migrating bird, restlessness seized me during the month of October which would have forced a change of climate on me if I had only had the use of wings, and sufficient time to spare: the clouds which sped across the sky made me envy their flight. In order to evade this instinct I rushed off to Chantilly. I wandered the lawns where old guardsmen shuffled along at the edge of the woods. A flight of crows scudding in front of me, among the broom, copses and clearings, led me to the lakes of Commelle. Death had already breathed on the friends who once accompanied me to the White Queen's Castle: these secluded sites were no more than a sad horizon, opening, for an instant, into my past. In the days of *René*, I would have discovered life's mysteries in the Thève stream: its course steals among horsetails and moss; reeds veil it; it dies away among the pools that nourish its birth, endlessly vanishing, endlessly renewing: those waters charmed me when I bore within me a wilderness with its phantoms, who smiled on me despite their melancholy, and whom I adorned with flowers.

Returning beside the barely visible hedgerows, rain surprised me; I took refuge under a beech tree: its last leaves were falling like my days; its crown like my hair was thinning; it was marked on its trunk with a red circle, for felling, like me. Back at my inn, with an armful of autumn plants, and in a mood hardly disposed for joy, I will recount for you the death of Monsieur le Duc d'Enghien, in sight of the ruins of Chantilly.

That death, at first, froze all hearts with terror; people dreaded the return of Robespierre's reign. Paris thought it saw the return of one of those days one sees only once in a lifetime, the day of Louis XVI's execution. Bonaparte's servants, friends and relatives were dismayed. Abroad, if popular feeling was swiftly stifled by diplomatic language, the event none the less touched the crowd's heart. Among the family of Bourbon exiles the coup penetrated deeply: Louis XVIII returned his Order of the Golden Fleece to the King of Spain, which Bonaparte happened to have been decorated with; its dispatch was accompanied by this letter, which does honor to the royal spirit:

*'Sir and dear cousin, there can be nothing in common between myself and the great criminal whom audacity and fate have placed on a throne which he has had the barbarity to stain with the pure blood of a Bourbon, the Duc d'Enghien. Religion may oblige me to pardon an assassin; but the tyrant over my people must be my enemy forever. Providence, for reasons which are inexplicable, may condemn me to end my days in exile; but neither my contemporaries, nor posterity, will be able to say that, in times of adversity, I showed myself unworthy to occupy, until my last breath, the throne of my ancestors.'*

One must not forget another name which was associated with that of the Duc d'Enghien: Gustave-Adolphe, since dethroned and banished, was the only king then reigning who dared to raise his voice to protect the young French prince. He ordered an aide-de-camp to be sent from Carlsruhe with a letter to Bonaparte; the letter arrived too late: the last of the Condé no longer existed. Gustave-Adolphe returned his Order of the Black Eagle to the King of Prussia, as Louis XVIII had returned his Golden Fleece to the King of Spain. Gustave declared to the heir of Frederick the Great that in accord with *the laws of chivalry* he could not consent to be the brother-in-arms of the murderer of the Duc d'Enghien. (Bonaparte had



received the Black Eagle.) How much bitter derision there was expressed by those nigh on foolish tokens of chivalry, suppressed everywhere except in the heart of an unfortunate king on behalf of a murdered friend; a noble sympathy towards misfortune, one which lived concealed and not understood, in an unknowing world of men!

Alas! We had endured too many varying despotisms, and our characters, crushed beneath a series of ills and oppressions, no longer had sufficient energy to allow grief to wear mourning for the death of young Condé for long: little by little the tears dried; fear spilled over in the form of congratulations on the danger which the First Consul had just escaped; it wept with gratitude at having been saved by so saintly a sacrifice. Nero, at Seneca's dictation, wrote an apologetic letter to the Senate regarding Agrippina's murder; the senators, carried away, heaped blessings on the magnanimous son who had not feared to pluck out his own heart by so salutary an act of matricide! Society quickly returned to its pleasures; it was afraid of its own mourning: after the Terror, the victims, who had been spared, danced; forced themselves to appear happy, and fearful lest they be suspected of the crime of remembering, displayed the same cheerfulness with which they went to the scaffold.

The Duc d'Enghien was not arrested on the spur of the moment, without thought; Bonaparte had taken account of the various Bourbons in Europe. In a meeting attended by Messieurs de Talleyrand and Fouché, it was noted that the Duc d'Angoulême was in Warsaw with Louis XVIII; the Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Berry were in London, with the Princes de Condé and de Bourbon. The youngest of the Condés was at Ettenheim, in the Duchy of Baden. It appears that Taylor and Drake, English agents, were intriguing on his behalf. The Duc de Bourbon warned his son, on the 16th of June 1803, of the possibility of arrest, in a note to him addressed from London which is extant. Bonaparte summoned his two consular colleagues to him; he first reproached Monsieur Réal bitterly for having left him in ignorance of what was being plotted against him. He listened patiently to their objections: it was Cambacérès who expressed himself most vigorously. Bonaparte thanked him and passed on. That is what I have read in Cambacérès' Memoirs which one of his nephews, Monsieur de Cambacérès, a Peer of France, has allowed me to consult, in a most obliging manner of which I retain the grateful memory. The missile once sent on its way does not return; it goes where the engineer sends it, and descends. In order to execute Bonaparte's orders, it was necessary to violate German territory, and that territory was promptly violated. The Duc d'Enghien was arrested at Ettenheim. With him, not General Dumouriez, but only the Marquis de Thumery and a few other *émigrés* of little renown were found: that should have been a warning that an error had been made. The Duc d'Enghien was taken to Strasbourg. The commencement of the catastrophe of Vincennes has been recounted for us by the Prince himself: he left behind a little journal of the journey from Ettenheim to Strasbourg: the hero of the tragedy steps onto the forestage to pronounce the prologue:

#### JOURNAL OF THE DUC D'ENGHIEN

*'On Tuesday the 15th of March, at Ettenheim, my house surrounded by a detachment of dragoons, pickets and military police; in total, about two hundred men, two generals, the colonel of dragoons, colonel Charlot of the Strasbourg military police, at five o'clock (in the morning). At five-thirty the doors broken open, taken to Le Moulin near La Tuilerie. My papers removed, sealed. Led in a cart, between two lines of fusiliers, to the Rhine. Embarked for Rheinau. Disembarked and marched on foot to Pfortsheim. Breakfast at the inn. Climbed into a carriage with Colonel Charlot, the sergeant of the gendarmerie, a gendarme on the box seat, and Grünstein. Arrived at Strasbourg, at Colonel Charlot's house, towards*

*five-thirty. Transferred, half an hour later, in a fiacre, to the citadel ..... Sunday the 18th, they came to fetch me at one-thirty in the morning. I was not given time to dress. I embraced my unfortunate companions, and my people. I left alone with two officers of the gendarmerie and two gendarmes. Colonel Charlot announced to me that we were going to see the Divisional General, who had received orders from Paris. Instead of that, I found a carriage with six post-horses waiting in the Place de l'Église. Lieutenant Petermann climbed up beside me, sergeant Blitersdorff on the box seat, two gendarmes inside, the other outside.'*

Here the shipwrecked voyager, about to be swallowed up, broke off his logbook.

Arriving about four o'clock in the evening at one of the gates of the capital, where the Strasbourg road terminated, the carriage, instead of entering Paris, followed the outer boulevard and stopped at the Château of Vincennes. The Prince, descending from the carriage in the inner courtyard, was conducted to a room in the fortress, and locked in, at which point he fell asleep. As the Prince approached Paris, Bonaparte affected an unnatural calm. On the 18th of March he left for Malmaison; it was Palm Sunday. Madame Bonaparte, who, with all her family, was told of the Prince's arrest, spoke to him about it. Bonaparte replied: '*You understand nothing of politics.*' Colonel Savary had become one of Bonaparte's regular companions. Why? Because he had seen the First Consul in tears at Marengo. Men apart must suppress their own tears, they who put ordinary men under the yoke. Tears are one of those weaknesses by which a witness can render himself master of a great man's will.

It is certain that the First Consul drew up all the orders for Vincennes. It was stated in one of those orders, that if the sentence anticipated was a death sentence, it was to be carried out immediately. I believe that version of events, even though I cannot prove it, since the orders have vanished. Madame de Rémusat, who on the evening of the 20th March, was playing chess at Malmaison with the First Consul, heard him mutter a few lines on Augustus' clemency; she thought that Bonaparte had come to himself, and that the Prince was safe. No; fate had pronounced its oracle. When Savary re-appeared at Malmaison, Madame Bonaparte guessed the whole unhappy business. The First Consul shut himself up alone for several hours. And then the breeze sighed, and all was over.

#### THE MILITARY COMMISSION APPOINTED

Bonaparte's order, of the 20th Ventôse Year XII (20th March 1804), appointed a military commission, composed of seven members nominated by the Governor-General of Paris (Murat), to meet at Vincennes, to judge *the former Duc d'Enghien, accused of carrying arms against the Republic etc.*

Executing this order, the same day, 20th Ventôse, Joachim Murat nominates to the aforesaid commission, seven officers; namely:

General Hulin, commanding the Grenadiers of the Consular Guard, President;

Colonel Guittou, commanding the 1st Regiment Cuirassiers;

Colonel Bazancourt, commanding the 4th Regiment Light Infantry;

Colonel Ravier, commanding the 18th Infantry Regiment;

Colonel Barrois, commanding the 96th Infantry Regiment;

Colonel Rabbe, commanding the 2nd Regiment Paris Municipal Guard

Citizen d'Autancourt, Major of the Élite Gendarmerie, who will fulfil the functions of Recording-Officer.

## INTERROGATION BY THE RECORDING-OFFICER

Captain d'Autancourt, Squadron Commander Jacquin, of the Élite Legion, two gendarmes from the same corps, Lerva and Tharsis, and citizen Noirot, a lieutenant in the same corps, go to the Duc d'Enghien's room; they wake him: he has no more than a quarter of an hour to wait before returning to his rest. The recording-officer, assisted by Molin, captain in the 18th Regiment, chosen as clerk of the court by the aforesaid recording-officer, interrogates the Prince.

Asked for his name, forenames, age and place of birth?

*Replied that his name was Louis-Antoine-Henri de Bourbon, Duc d'Enghien, born the 2nd of August 1772, at Chantilly.*

Asked where he had lived since his departure from France?

*Replied that having accompanied his relatives, and the Army of Condé being formed, he had been completely involved in the war and that before that he was involved in the campaign of 1792, in Brabant, with the Bourbon Army.*

Asked if he had been to England at any time, and if that power had granted him a regular allowance?

*Replied that he had never been there: that England did grant him an allowance which was all he had to live on.*

Asked what rank he held in the Army of Condé?

*Replied: Commander of the Vanguard in 1796, before that campaign a volunteer at his grandfather's headquarters, but always, since 1796, Commander of the Vanguard.*

Asked if he had known General Pichegru; and had dealings with him?

*Replied: I don't think I have ever seen him. I have never met with him. I know he wished to meet me. I congratulate myself on not having known him, given the vile means they say he intended to employ, if what they say is true.*

Asked if he knew ex-general Dumouriez, and had dealings with him?

*Replied: No longer.*

From this, the present account has been drawn up, and signed by the Duc d'Enghien, Squadron Commander Jacquin, Lieutenant Noirot, the two gendarmes and the Recording-Officer.

Before signing the final account of his interrogation, the Duc d'Enghien said: '*I am making an official request for a personal audience with the First Consul. My name, rank, opinions and the horror of my situation make me hopeful that he will not refuse my request.*'

## JUDGEMENT OF THE SESSION OF THE MILITARY COMMISSION

At two in the morning, on the 21st of March, the Duc d'Enghien was led to the room where the commission was sitting, and repeated what he had said during his interrogation by the Recording-Officer. He persisted in his declaration: he added that he was prepared for war, and that he wished to serve in England's latest war with France. *'Being asked if he had anything to say in his own defense, he replied he had no more to say.'*

*The President had the accused removed; the council deliberated in private, the President took a vote, starting with the most junior rank; then, having given his opinion last, by a unanimous vote declared the Duc d'Enghien to be guilty, and applied to him the article...of the law...so designated...and in consequence condemned him to death. It was ordered that the present judgement be executed at once at the behest of the Recording-Officer, after having read the sentence to the condemned man, in the presence of various detachments of the garrison.*

*Completed, closed and sentence passed, in continuous session, at Vincennes, on the day, month and year above, and we have duly signed.'*

The grave being *completed, filled, and closed*, ten years of oblivion, general consensus, and astounding glory covered it; the grass grew to the sound of salvoes announcing victory, to illuminations lighting the Papal coronation, the marriage of the daughter of the Caesars, and the birth of the King of Rome. Only a few afflicted individuals, wandering the woods, adventured a furtive glance into the depths of the moat towards the dreadful place, while a handful of prisoners observed it from the heights of the keep that enclosed them. The Restoration came: the soil of the grave was disturbed, and with it various consciences; each sought to justify itself. Monsieur Dupin the Elder published his discussion of the matter; Monsieur Hulin, President of the military commission, spoke out; Monsieur le Duc de Rovigo entered into controversy by accusing Monsieur de Talleyrand; a third party replied on Monsieur de Talleyrand's behalf, and Napoleon raised his great voice from the rock of St Helena.

These documents should be reproduced and studied, in order to assign to each of the actors the role he fulfilled and the place which he ought to occupy in the drama. It is night, and we are at Chantilly; it was night when the Duc d'Enghien was at Vincennes.

BOOK XVI  
CHAPTER 3  
The Year 1804

Chantilly, November 1837

When Monsieur Dupin published his pamphlet, he sent me a copy of it with this letter:

*Paris, this 10th November 1823.*

*‘Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*Please accept a copy of my publication regarding the assassination of the Duc d’Enghien.*

*It would have appeared long before, if I had not desired, before all, to respect the wishes of Monseigneur le Duc de Bourbon, who having knowledge of my work, had expressed his desire that the deplorable affair not be disinterred.*

*But Providence having allowed others to take the initiative, it became necessary to make the truth known, and after being assured that no one wished me to keep silence about the matter any longer, I have spoken with freedom and sincerity.*

*I have the honor to be with profound respect,*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*Your Excellency’s most humble and obedient servant,*

*DUPIN.’*

Monsieur Dupin whom I congratulated and thanked, revealed in his accompanying letter a little known and touching quality of the noble and compassionate virtues possessed by the victim’s father. Monsieur Dupin began his pamphlet thus:

*‘The death of the unfortunate Duc d’Enghien is one of those events which most grieved the French nation: it has dishonored the Consular government.*

*A young Prince, in the flower of his years, surprised deceitfully on foreign soil, where he lived in peace, under the protection of the rights of man; carried off violently to France; dragged in front of so-called judges who, in no sense had the right to act as his; accused of imaginary crimes; deprived of the aid of a defence counsel; interrogated and condemned behind closed doors; put to death at night in the moat of a fortress that acted as a State prison, so many unknown virtues, and so many dear hopes thus destroyed, will forever render this catastrophe one of the most revolting acts to which an absolute government could abandon itself!*

*If the forms were not respected; if the judges were incompetents; if they did not even take the trouble to give, in making their judgement, the dates and texts of the laws on which they pretended to base their sentence; if the poor Duc d’Enghien was shot by virtue of an order left unsigned...and not regularized*

*until after the blow was struck, then he is no longer simply the innocent victim of a legal error; it is time to give the matter its true name: it was an odious assassination.'*

This eloquent exordium leads Monsieur Dupin to an examination of the evidence: he shows firstly the illegality of the arrest; the Duc d'Enghien was not arrested in France; he was not a prisoner of war, because he was not armed when captured; he was not a prisoner on civil grounds, since extradition was not requested; it was a violent abduction of an individual, comparable to those of Tunisian and Algerian pirates, an attack by brigands, *incursio latronum*.

The legal expert goes on to consider the incompetence of the military commission; information concerning so-called plots, which may have been woven against the State, has never been the responsibility of military commissions.

Following that he comes to an examination of the trial:

*'The interrogation (Monsieur Dupin continues) took place on the 29th Ventôse at midnight. On the 30th Ventôse, at two in the morning, the Duc d'Enghien was brought before the military commission.*

*In the minutes of the trial one reads: Today, the 30th Ventôse Year XII of the Republic, at two in the morning: those words, two in the morning, which could only have been set down there because it was indeed that hour, were erased from the minutes, without being replaced by any other indication.*

*Not one single witness against the accused was produced, or heard.*

*The accused is declared guilty! Guilty of what? The judgement does not say.*

*Every judgement which pronounces sentence must contain a citation of the law in virtue of which the sentence is applied.*

*Well, in this case, none of the forms were applied: there is no mention in these proceedings that the commission had before it a copy of the law; nothing certifies that the President had read the text before applying it. Far from doing so, the judgement, in its material expression, proves that the commission declared its sentence without knowing either the date or the content of the law; since it has left blank in the minutes, regarding the sentence, the date of the law, the article number, and the place destined to receive its text. And yet it is on the basis of a sentence framed in this unsatisfactory way that the noblest of blood was spilt by the executioners!*

*Deliberations may be carried out in secret: but the declaration of the judgement has to be made in public; it is the Law furthermore that tells us this. Now the judgement of 30th Ventôse does indeed say: The council deliberated behind closed doors; but there is no mention there of the doors being re-opened, there is nothing there saying that the result of those deliberations was declared in public session. If it did say so, how could anyone credit it? A public session, at two in the morning, in the keep of Vincennes, while every entrance to the castle was guarded by elite gendarmes! In the end, they did not even take the precaution of resorting to a lie; the judgement is silent on this point.*

*The judgement is signed by the President and the six other members of the commission, including the Reporting-Officer; but it is noticeable that the minute was not signed by the Clerk of the Court, whose confirmation was needed however to grant it authenticity.*

*The sentence ends in this terrible phrase: to be executed IMMEDIATELY at the behest of the Recording Officer.*

*IMMEDIATELY! Desperate words, the work of judges! IMMEDIATELY! And yet a law, that of 15th Brumaire Year VI, expressly granted the right of appeal against all military judgements!*

Monsieur Dupin, passing on to the execution, continues thus:

*‘Interrogated at night, tried at night, the Duc d’Enghien was killed at night. That terrible sacrifice had to be consummated in darkness, so that all the laws may be said to have been violated, all, even those which prescribed that executions should be conducted in public.’*

Our legal expert now comes to the irregularities in the hearing: *‘Article 19 of the law of 13th Brumaire, Year V, lays down that after ending the interrogation, the Recording-Officer shall tell the accused to select a friend to defend him. – The accused shall have the right to choose his defence from any class of citizen present at the time; if he declares himself unable to choose, the Recording-Officer shall choose for him.*

*Oh, the Prince certainly had no friends (an allusion to a disgraceful reply it is said they made to Monsieur le Duc d’Enghien) among those who surrounded him! That cruel statement was made to him by one of the actors in that horrible scene!...Alas! Why were we not present? Why was the Prince not permitted to make an appeal to the Paris Bar? There, he would have found friends in adversity, defenders in misfortune. It was with a view to making this judgement presentable to the public eye that a new version of it seems to have been prepared when time allowed. The later substitution of this second version, more regular in appearance than the first (though equally unjust) in no way reduced the odiousness of ordering the Duc d’Enghien’s execution based on a threadbare judgement signed in haste, and which as yet has never received a full explanation.’*

Such is Monsieur Dupin’s illuminating pamphlet. However I am not sure myself, regarding an act of the kind that the author examines, that greater or lesser irregularity is of any importance: if the Duc d’Enghien had been strangled in a post-chaise from Strasbourg to Paris, or killed in the woods of Vincennes, the thing is the same. But is it not providential to see, after many years, one set of men demonstrating the irregularity of a murder in which they were not involved, while another set rush, without it being demanded of them, to public interrogation? What have they heard? What voice from on high has summoned them to appear?

BOOK XVI  
CHAPTER 4  
General Hulin

Chantilly, November 1837

After the grand legal expert, here comes a blind veteran: he commanded grenadiers of the Old Guard; enough said, to the brave. His final wound in the jaw he received from Malet, whose ineffectual lead was left embedded in a visage that did not flinch from the bullet. *Afflicted by blindness, retired from society, having only family cares for consolation* (these are his very words), the Duc d'Enghien's judge seems to rise from the grave at the command of the Sovereign Judge; he pleads his cause without deceit or excuses:

*'Let no one be mistaken,' he says, 'regarding my intentions. I am not writing out of fear, since my person is protected by laws issuing from the throne itself, and under the government of a just king, I am not apprehensive of arbitrary violence. I am writing in order to speak the truth, even regarding things which may work against me. So, I do not seek to justify either the form or content of the judgement, but to show that it was rendered under the Empire and in the midst of a fatal combination of circumstances; I wish to distance my colleagues and myself from the idea that we were motivated by party. If we are still to be blamed for it, I would like them also to say of us: "They were most unfortunate!"'*

General Hulin confirms that, named as President of the military commission, he did not know its aim; that he arrived at Vincennes, still ignorant of it; that the other members of the commission were equally in ignorance; that the Governor of the château, Monsieur Harel, on being asked, replied that he himself knew nothing, adding these words: *"What would you have? I am nothing here. All is done without my orders or involvement: it is another who commands here."*

It was ten o'clock in the evening when General Hulin was freed from his uncertainty by the communication of documentary information to him.

– The interview was over by midnight, when the examination of the prisoner by the Recording-Officer was complete. *"Reading over the documents, 'said the President of the commission, 'gave rise to an incident. We remarked that at the end of the interrogation conducted before the Reporting-Officer, the Prince, before signing, traced, with his own hand, some lines in which he expressed his desire to have a meeting with the First Consul. One member of the commission proposed that this demand should be transmitted to the government. The commission had decided to refer the matter; but at that very moment, the general, who had just come to stand behind my chair, suggested that the request would be inopportune. Moreover, we found no legal arrangement which authorized us to defer judgement. The commission then passed on, setting aside time, after the discussions, to consider the prisoner's wish.'*

That is what General Hulin recounts. Now one can also read this passage in the Duc de Rovigo's pamphlet: *'There were sufficient persons there to make it difficult for me, arriving last, to get behind the President's seat where I managed to place myself.'*

Was it the Duc de Rovigo then who was *standing behind the chair* occupied by the President? But what right had he, or any other, having no role on the commission, to intervene in the discussions of that commission and suggest that a request was *inopportune*?



Let us hear the commander of grenadiers of the Old Guard speak of the courage of Condé's young son; he knew about such things:

*'I proceeded to interrogate the accused; I have to say, he appeared before us with noble assurance, rejecting totally any involvement directly or indirectly in a plot to assassinate the First Consul; but he did confess also to having borne arms against France, saying, with a courage and pride which did not allow for our varying the point, even in his own interest. "That he had maintained the rights of his family, and that a Condé could never return to France except under arms. My birth, my opinions," he added, "will render me forever an enemy to your government."*

*The firmness of his confession was the despair of his judges. A dozen times we set him a course towards revising his statements, always he persisted in an unshakeable manner: "I recognize," he said at intervals, "the honorable intentions of the members of the commission, but I can by no means take advantage of what they offer me." And regarding the warning that the military commission's judgement was final: "I know," he replied to me, "and I do not deceive myself as to the danger I court; I only wish for an interview with the First Consul."*

Is there a more moving page of our history? New France judging the former France, rendering it homage, presenting arms to it, saluting it with the flag while condemning it; the tribunal established in the fortress where [the Great Condé](#), as a prisoner, cultivated flowers: the general of grenadiers in Bonaparte's Guard, sitting opposite the last descendant of the victor of Rocroi, moved with admiration for the defenseless accused, a man forsaken on this earth, interrogating him while the sound of the gravedigger digging the grave mingled with the assured replies of the young soldier! A few days after the execution, General Hulin exclaimed: *'Oh what a brave young man! What courage! I would hope to die like him!'*

General Hulin, after speaking about the minutes, and the second version of the judgement, says: *'As for the second version, the sole truth is, since it did not contain the order for immediate execution, but only the immediate reading of the sentence to the condemned man, that the immediate execution was not the commission's doing, but solely those who took it upon their own responsibility to hasten that fatal deed.*

*Alas, we had many second thoughts! The judgement was barely signed before I sent a letter in which, rendering myself interpreter of the commission's unanimous wish, I wrote to the First Consul to make him aware of the wish that the Prince had expressed to have an interview with him, and also to entreat him to ease the difficulty which the constraints of our situation had not enabled us to evade.*

*It was at that moment that a man spoke, who was constantly present in the judgement chamber, and whom I would name in an instant, if I did not consider that, even though defending myself, I ought not to accuse him... – What are you doing? He asked me, drawing close to me. – I am writing to the First Consul, I replied, to express to him the wishes of the council and those of the condemned man. – Your business is done with, he said to me taking away the pen: now it is my concern.*

*I swear that I thought, and several of my colleagues did also, that he meant: It is my concern to advise the First Consul. The reply, taken in that sense, allowed us to hope that the request would be transmitted none the less. And how should we arrive at the idea that whoever it was who was with us, had been ordered to ignore the formalities the law requires?'*

The whole secret of that sad catastrophe is in this deposition. The old soldier, who, always prepared to die on the field of battle, had learnt from death the language of truth, concludes with these words:

*‘I have spoken about what passed in the hallway next to the meeting room. Private conversations took place; I was waiting for my carriage, which being unable to enter the inner courtyard, like those of other members, delayed my departure and theirs; we were ourselves locked in, without anyone being able to communicate from outside, when there was an explosion: a terrible noise which echoed in the depths of our souls and froze them with fear and dread.*

*Yes, I swear, in the name of all my colleagues, that execution was not authorized by us: our judgement stated that it would be sent by dispatch to the Minister of War, the Chief Justice, and the Governor-General of Paris.*

*The order of execution could not have been properly decreed except by the latter; the copies had not yet been dispatched; they could not reach their destination before some part of the day had passed. Returning to Paris, if I had sought out the Governor, the First Consul, what did I know? And all at once a fearful noise had just revealed to us that the Prince no longer existed!*

*We did not know if he who had hastened that sad execution, so cruelly, had orders to do so: if he had not, he alone was responsible; if he had, the commission, not privy to the orders, the commission, set up privately, the commission, whose first wish was for the health of the Prince, could have done nothing to prevent, or evade the outcome. One cannot accuse it of causing that event.*

*The twenty years that have passed since have not lessened the bitterness of my regrets. Let them accuse me of ignorance, of error, I agree; let them reproach me with obedience to that which I would well know how to evade today, in similar circumstances; my attachment to a man whom I thought destined to work the good of my country; my loyalty to a government which I thought legitimate then and which had received my pledge; but let them take account of the fact that I, and my colleagues, had been summoned to pronounce judgement in the midst of fatal circumstances.’*

The defence is weak, but you repent General: may peace be with you! If your judgement acted as the last Condé’s order to depart, you will march, in the vanguard of the dead, to rejoin that last conscript of our former country. The young soldier will take pleasure in sharing his slumber with the grenadier of the Old Guard; the France of Fribourg and the France of Marengo will rest together.

BOOK XVI  
CHAPTER 5  
The Duc de Rovigo

Chantilly, November 1837

Monsieur le Duc de Rovigo, striking his breast, takes his place in the procession which comes to confess before the grave. I had been in the confidence of the Minister of Police for some time; he was swayed by the influence he supposed me to have had in the return of the legitimacy: he communicated to me a part of his *Mémoires*. Men, in his position, speak of what they have done with marvelous candor; they have no suspicion of what they are saying against themselves: accusing themselves without being aware of it, they never suspect there might be another opinion to their own, either regarding the functions with which they were charged, or their mode of conduct. If they have been lacking in loyalty, they never consider they have violated their oath; if they have taken upon themselves roles repugnant to other characters than theirs, they believe they have rendered great service. Their naivety does not justify them, but it excuses them.

Monsieur le Duc de Rovigo consulted me about the chapters where he treats of the Duc d'Enghien's death; he wished to know my thoughts, precisely because he knew what I had done; I was grateful for this mark of esteem, and repaying frankness with frankness, advised him not to publish. I said to him: *'Let it all die; in France it doesn't take long to forget. You imagine that you will absolve Napoleon of reproach and throw the blame on Monsieur de Talleyrand; well, you have not sufficiently justified the former, and not sufficiently condemned the latter. You are exposing your flank to your enemies; they will not lose the opportunity to reply. What need is there for you to remind the public that you commanded the elite gendarmerie at Vincennes? They are unaware of the direct involvement you had in that unhappy event and you will be revealing it to them. General, throw the manuscript in the fire: I am speaking in your own interest.'*

Imbued with the governmental maxims of the Empire, the Duc de Rovigo thought those maxims equally suited to the legitimate monarchy; he had the conviction that his pamphlet would re-open the gates of the Tuileries to him.

It is partly in the light of his writings that posterity will see the ghosts of mourning silhouetted. I wished to hide the accused, he who had come seeking my help in the night; he would not accept the protection of my hearth.

Monsieur de Rovigo tells the story of the departure of Monsieur de Caulaincourt, whom he does not name; he speaks of the abduction from Ettenheim, the journey of the prisoner to Strasbourg, and his arrival at Vincennes. After an expedition to the Normandy coast, General Savary returned to Malmaison. He was summoned, at five in the evening on the 19th of March 1804, to the office of the First Consul, who gave him a sealed letter to take to General Murat, the Governor of Paris. He flew to the General's residence, met the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and received the order to take the elite gendarmerie and go to Vincennes. He arrived there at eight in the evening and saw the members of the commission arriving. He later reached the room where the Prince was being tried, on the 20th, at one in the morning, and went to sit behind the President. He reports the Duc d'Enghien's replies, more or less as they are reported in the proceedings of the solitary session. He told me that the Prince, after he had given his last

response, quickly removed his cap, set it down on the table, and like a man resigning life, said to the President: *'Sir, I have nothing more to say.'*

Monsieur de Rovigo insists that the meeting was not at all mysterious: *'The doors of the room,'* he affirms, *'were open freely to anyone who might be present there at that hour.'* Monsieur Dupin has already noted this tortuous reasoning. Regarding that occasion, even Monsieur Achille Roche, who usually seems to write on behalf of Monsieur Talleyrand, exclaims: *'The meeting was in no way mysterious! At midnight, it was held in the inhabited part of the castle; in the inhabited part of a prison! Who assisted at that meeting? Gaolers, soldiers, executioners.'*

No one can give more precise details as to the time and place where the lightning struck than Monsieur le Duc de Rovigo; let us hear him:

*'After the delivery of the verdict, I retired with the officers of my corps who, like me, had assisted in the discussion, and went to rejoin the troops on the esplanade of the Château. The officer, who commanded the infantry in my legion, came to tell me with deep emotion, that a picket had been demanded of him to execute the military commission's sentence: –Supply them, I replied. – But, where shall I place them? – There, where you won't wound anyone. For the inhabitants of the heavily populated areas of Paris were already afoot on their way to the various markets.'*

*'After taking a good look round, the officer chose the moat as being the best place to avoid wounding anyone. Monsieur le Duc d'Enghien was taken there by the stairs of the entrance tower on the Park side, and there heard the sentence, which was executed.'*

Beneath this paragraph, one finds a note by the author of the memoir: *'Between the sentence and the execution the grave was dug. That is why it has been said that the grave was dug before the verdict.'*

Unfortunately, there is deplorable negligence here: *'Monsieur de Rovigo claims,'* says Monsieur Achille Roche, apologist for Monsieur de Talleyrand, *'that he was obeying orders! Who transmitted the order for the execution to him? It appears it was a Monsieur Delga, killed at Wagram. But whether it was Monsieur Delga, or not, if Monsieur Savary is in error in naming Monsieur Delga, doubtless no one today will claim the glory that he attributes to that officer. Monsieur de Rovigo is accused of having hastened the execution; he replies that it was not him: a man who has since died told him he had given the orders to hasten it.'*

The Duc de Rovigo is not satisfactory on the subject of the execution, which he says took place in daylight; however that changes nothing, it would merely remove a torch from the tragedy.

*'At sunrise, in the open air, would it need a lantern,'* the General asks, *'in order to see a man, at six paces! It was only the case that the sun,'* he adds, *'was not clear and bright; since a fine rain had fallen all night, and a damp mist remained which delayed his appearance. The execution took place at six in the morning, the fact is attested to by indisputable documents.'*

But the General neither supplies, nor indicates the whereabouts of, these documents. The progress of the trial demonstrates that the Duc d'Enghien was sentenced at two in the morning and was shot immediately. Those words, two in the morning, initially written down at the beginning of the trial, were afterwards erased from the minutes. The official report of the exhumation, on the deposition of three witnesses,

Madame Bon, Monsieur Godard, and Monsieur Bounelet (the latter had helped dig the grave), proves that he was put to death at night. Monsieur Dupin the Elder recalls the circumstance that a taper had been pinned over the Duc d'Enghien's heart, to serve as a focal point to aim at, or held by the Prince with a firm hand, with the same intention. They spoke of a large stone removed from the grave with which the subject's head would have been crushed. Finally, the Duc de Rovigo is claimed to have taken possession of various remains of the victim: I myself believed these rumors; but the legal documents prove them to be unfounded.

In the official report, dated Tuesday the 20th March 1816, by the doctors and surgeons, regarding the exhumation of the body, it was acknowledged that the skull was fractured, that *the upper jaw, entirely separated from the bones of the face*, was furnished with twelve teeth; that the lower jaw, completely fractured, was split in two and revealed only three teeth. The body was face down, the head lower than the feet; the neck vertebrae were encircled by a gold chain.

The second official report of the exhumation (with the same date, 20th March 1816), the General Report, certifies that they found, along with the rest of the skeleton, a leather purse containing eleven gold pieces, seventy gold pieces in sealed rolls, some hair, the remains of his clothes, and fragments of his cap bearing the marks of the bullets that had passed through it.

So, Monsieur de Rovigo had removed no relics; the earth which held them has rendered them again, and testified to the General's probity; no taper had been pinned over the Prince's heart, the fragments of it would have been found, like those of the torn cap; no large stone had been removed from the grave; the pickets' fire *at six paces* had sufficed to shatter the skull, and separate the upper jaw from the bones of the face, etc.

The only items this mockery of human vanities lacks are the similar immolation of Murat, the Governor of Paris, the death of the captive Bonaparte, and this inscription engraved on the Duc d'Enghien's coffin: *'Here is the body of the very noble and mighty Prince of the blood, Peer of France, died at Vincennes on the 21st of March 1804, aged 31 years 7 months and 19 days.'* The body was bare shattered bones; the noble and mighty Prince, the broken fragments of a soldier's corpse: not a word to recall the catastrophe, not a word of blame or grief in this epitaph engraved by a family in tears; what a prodigious effort of respect the century shows to revolutionary works and sensitivities! They have hastened likewise to get rid of the Duc de Berry's mortuary chapel.

What futility! Bourbons, returning uselessly to your palaces, you have to do only with exhumations and funerals; your time has passed. God willed it! France's former glory died beneath the gaze of the Great Conde's shade, in a moat at Vincennes: perhaps at the very place where Louis IX, *whom one ever approached as if he were a saint, 'sat beneath an oak, where any who had business with him came to speak with him, without hindrance by bailiffs or others; and when he heard whatever required amends, in the words of those who spoke for others, he amended it with his own lips, and all those who had business before him were around him'* (JOINVILLE).

The Duc d'Enghien asked to speak to Bonaparte: he had business before him; he was not heard! Who was there, on the edge of the outworks, contemplating, in the depths of the moat, those weapons, those soldiers hardly illuminated by a lantern in the mist and shadow, as if in eternal night? Where was the light

placed? Did the Duc d'Enghien have his open grave at his feet? Was he required to stride across it to place himself at the distance of six paces mentioned by the Duc de Rovigo?

There is a letter extant from the nine-year old Duc d'Enghien to his father the Duc de Bourbon; he writes to him: *'All the Enghiens are fortunate; he of the battle of Cerisoles, he who won the battle of Rocroi: I hope to be so too.'*

Is it true that the victim was refused a priest? Is it true that he had difficulty in finding anyone whom he could charge with carrying to a woman a last token of his attachment? What did feelings of piety or tenderness matter to his executioners? He was there to die, the Duc d'Enghien, to die.

Through the ministrations of a priest, the Duc d'Enghien had married Princess Charlotte de Rohan secretly: in those times when the country was in turmoil, a man, by reason of his rank, could be subjected to a thousand political restrictions; in order to enjoy what society in general allows all of us, he was obliged to hide. This legitimate marriage, common knowledge today, heightened the splendor of his tragic end; for heavenly mercy he substituted heavenly glory: religion perpetuated the unfortunate man's pomp when, following the completion of the catastrophe, a cross was raised over that deserted place.

BOOK XVI  
CHAPTER 6  
Monsieur de Talleyrand

Chantilly, November 1837

Following Monsieur de Rovigo's pamphlet, Monsieur de Talleyrand presented a supporting memoir to Louis XVIII: this memoir, which I have not seen, and which ought to have clarified everything, clarified nothing. Named as plenipotentiary minister to Berlin, in 1820, I dug up, from the ambassadorial archives, a letter from Citizen Laforest, writing to Citizen Talleyrand, on the subject of Monsieur le Duc d'Enghien. This vigorous letter is the more honorable in that its author does not hesitate to compromise his career, while receiving no reward by way of public opinion, his action remaining unknown: a noble abnegation by a man who, by his very obscurity, condemned the good he had done to obscurity also.

Monsieur de Talleyrand received the lecture, and was silent; at least, I have not found anything from him in the identical archive, concerning the Prince's death. Yet, the Minister for Foreign Affairs sent word to the Minister for the Elector of Baden, on the 2nd Ventôse: *'that the First Consul has thought it his duty to give an order to the detachments to go to Offenbourg and Ettenheim, and there seize the instigators of unheard-of conspiracies which, by their nature, put beyond the law all those who manifestly have been involved in them.'*

Extracts from the writings of Generals Gourgaud and Montholon, and of Doctor Warden place Bonaparte on stage: *'My minister,'* he said, *'represented to me most strongly that it was essential to seize the Duc d'Enghien, although he was on neutral territory. But I still hesitated, and the Prince of Benevento twice brought me the order for his arrest, for my signature. It was not until later however that I was convinced of the urgency for such an action, and decided to sign.'*

According to the Mémorial de Saint-Hélène, the following words escaped Bonaparte: *'The Duc d'Enghien carried himself with great bravery before the tribunal. On his arrival at Strasbourg, he wrote me a letter: that letter was handed over to Talleyrand who kept it until the execution.'*

I think little of this idea of a letter: Napoleon has transformed into a letter the request that the Duc d'Enghien made to talk to the Conqueror of Italy, or rather the few lines expressing this request, which, before signing the interrogation attributed to him in front of the Recording-Officer, the Prince had traced in his own hand. However, since this letter has not been found, a rigorous conclusion must be that it was never written: *'I know,'* said the Duc de Rovigo, *'that in the first days of the Restoration, in 1814, one of Monsieur de Talleyrand's secretaries searched endlessly in the archives, beneath the Museum gallery. I have this information from the person who received the order to allow him entry there. He did the same at the War Office, searching for the notes from the trial of Monsieur le Duc D'Enghien, of which only the record of the sentence remained.'*

The fact is correct: all Monsieur Talleyrand's diplomatic papers and notably his correspondence with the Emperor and the First Consul, were transported from the Museum archives to his house on the Rue Saint-Florentin; part were destroyed; the rest were tucked away in a stove, that they neglected to light: the prudence of the minister could do no more to counteract the rashness of the Prince. The documents were retrieved unburned; someone thought them worth keeping: I have held in my hands and read with my own

eyes one of Monsieur de Talleyrand's letters; it is dated the 8th of March 1804 and relates to the arrest of Monsieur le Duc d'Enghien which had not yet been performed. The Minister invites the First Consul to act harshly against his enemies. I was not allowed to retain the letter, and only remember these two passages: *'If justice obliges us to punish rigorously, politics requires us to punish without exception.....'*

*I indicated Monsieur de Caulaincourt to the First Consul, as one to whom he could give his orders, and who would execute them with discretion as well as loyalty.'*

Will this document by the Prince de Talleyrand appear in its entirety one day? I know not; but what I do know is that it was still in existence two years ago.

There was an agreement in council to arrest the Duc d'Enghien. Cambacères, in his unpublished Memoirs affirms, and I believe it, that he opposed the arrest; but in recounting what he said, he does not say how he replied.

As for the rest, the Mémorial de Saint-Hélène denies the appeals for clemency to which Bonaparte might have been exposed. The imaginary scene in which Joséphine on her knees begged mercy for the Duc d'Enghien, grasping a piece of her husband's clothing and being dragged along by that inexorable husband, is one of those melodramatic inventions with which our writers of fable today compose true histories. Josephine had no knowledge, on the evening of the 19th of March, that the Duc d'Enghien was being tried; she only knew of his arrest. She had promised Madame de Rémusat to interest herself in the Prince's fate. When the latter returned to Malmaison with Josephine, on the evening of the 19th, it was remarked that the future Empress, instead of being wholly preoccupied by the danger surrounding the prisoner at Vincennes, often put her head out of the carriage window to look at a general melee among her following: female coquetry had banished any thought that might have saved the Duc d'Enghien's life. It was not till the 21st of March that Bonaparte said to his wife: *'The Duc d'Enghien has been shot.'* That phrase, uttered while looking at a clock, has been wrongly attributed to Monsieur de Talleyrand.

The Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat, which I have read, are extremely interesting regarding the internal details of the Imperial Court. The author burnt them during the Hundred Days, and then wrote them anew: they are only memories written from memory; the coloring is weak; but Bonaparte is always shown there nakedly and judged impartially.

The men attached to Napoleon say that he knew nothing of the death of the Duc d'Enghien until after the execution of the Prince: this idea appears to receive some support from the anecdote repeated aloud by the Duc de Rovigo, concerning Réal's visit to Vincennes, if the anecdote is true. Once the death had been brought about by revolutionary party intrigue, Bonaparte recognized it as a *fait accompli*, in order not to annoy those whom he considered powerful: this ingenious explanation will not do.



## BOOK XVI

### CHAPTER 7

#### Their various roles

Summarizing these facts now, this is what they prove to me: Bonaparte wanted the Duc d'Enghien dead; no one had made that death a condition for his accession to the throne. Such a supposed condition is one of those political subtleties that pretend to find occult causes for everything. – However, it is probable that certain compromised individuals did not view without pleasure the idea of the First Consul being at odds with the Bourbons forever. The trial at Vincennes was an affair that owed itself to Bonaparte's violent temperament, a fit of cold anger fed by his minister's reports.

Monsieur de Caulaincourt is not guilty of having executed the order of arrest.

Murat only had to reproach himself for transmitting general orders and not having had the strength to avoid doing so.

The Duc de Rovigo is found to have been charged with the execution; he probably had secret orders: General Hulin insinuates as much. Who would have dared take it upon himself to carry out a sentence of death on the Duc d'Enghien, if he had not been acting on Imperial orders?

As for Monsieur de Talleyrand, priest and gentleman, he inspired and prepared the ground for the murder by insistently prodding Bonaparte: he feared the return of the Legitimacy. It would be possible, by collating what Napoleon said at St Helena and the letters which the Bishop of Autun wrote, to prove that the latter played a vital role in the death of the Duc d'Enghien. It is in vain to object that the worldliness, character and education of the minister would distance him from violence, that corruption, to him, would have been a waste of energy; the fact would nevertheless remain that he persuaded the Consul to order the fatal arrest. That arrest of the Duc d'Enghien on the 15th of March, was not unknown to Monsieur Talleyrand; he was in daily communication with Bonaparte and conferred with him; during the interval which elapsed between the arrest and the execution, did Monsieur de Talleyrand, himself, the ministerial instigator, repent, did he say a single word to the First Consul in favor of the unfortunate Prince? It is natural to believe that he applauded the execution of the sentence.

The military commission tried the Duc d'Enghien, but with sadness and repented of it.

Such was, judging conscientiously, impartially, and strictly, the true part each played. My fate has been too closely tied to that catastrophe for me not to have tried to cast light among shadows and expose the details. If Bonaparte had not killed the Duc d'Enghien, if he had grown closer and closer to him (and his liking for him took him in that direction), what would the result have been for me? My literary career was over; entering fully into a political career, where I have proved what I might have done by my involvement with the War in Spain, I would have become rich and powerful. France might have gained from my reconciliation with the Emperor; I myself would have been lost. Perhaps I might have succeeded in maintaining some idea of liberty and moderation in the great man's mind; but my life, ranking among those one calls fortunate, would have been deprived of what has given it character and honor: poverty, conflict, and independence.

## BOOK XVI

### CHAPTER 8

Bonaparte: his sophistry and remorse

Chantilly, November 1837

Finally the principal accused appears, after all the others: he ends the parade of blood-stained penitents. Let us suppose that a judge had the person named Bonaparte appear before him, as the Recording-Officer had the person named d'Enghien appear; let us suppose that we had the minutes of the later interrogation before us in the same form as the earlier; read and compare:

On being asked his name and forenames?

– *He replied that his name was Napoléon Bonaparte.*

On being asked where he has resided since he left France?

– *He replied: at the Pyramids, Madrid, Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, and St Helena.*

On being asked what rank he occupied in the Army?

– *He replied: Commander of the Vanguard of the Armies of God. No other response emerges from the mouth of the defendant.*

The various actors of the tragedy are charged together; Bonaparte alone denies guilt in person; he does not bow his head, he stands upright; he cries, like the Stoic: '*Pain, I will never accept you as evil!*' But if in his pride he will never admit anything to the living, he is forced to confess to the dead. This Prometheus, the vulture at his breast, thief of celestial fire, believed himself superior to all, and he is forced to respond to the Duc d'Enghien whom he made dust before his time: the skeleton, a relic on which he bore down, interrogates him and masters him through divine necessity.

Domesticity and the army, the antechamber and the tent, had their representation on St Helena; a servant, estimable in his loyalty to his chosen master, placed himself beside Napoleon like an echo in his service. Foolishness imitated fable, by giving him a tone of sincerity. Bonaparte was *Destiny*; like her the outward form deceived enchanted minds; but at the root of these impostures, one heard that inexorable truth ring out: '*I am!*' And the universe felt the weight of it.

The author of the most reliable work concerning St Helena exposes a theory Napoleon invented for the benefit of murderers; the voluntary exile held as Gospel truth a murderous chatter with pretensions to profundity, which alone could explain the life of Napoleon, such as he wished to arrange it, and as he pretended it had been written. He left instructions for his neophytes: Monsieur le Comte de Las-Cases learnt his lessons without being aware; the prodigious prisoner, wandering in solitary walks, drew his credulous adorer after him with lies, as Hercules suspended men from his mouth by golden chains.

'*The first time,*' says the honest chamberlain, '*that I heard Napoleon pronounce the name of the Duc d'Enghien, I blushed with embarrassment. Happily, I was walking behind him on a narrow path or he*

*could not have missed seeing it. Nevertheless, when, for the first time, the Emperor developed his whole account of that event, its details and secondary incidents; when he revealed his various motives with his strict logic, luminously, carried away, I must confess the affair seemed to acquire a somewhat new appearance...The Emperor often dealt with this subject, which allowed me to remark in his person those characteristic nuances which were so pronounced. I was able to see in him very distinctly on that occasion, and many other times, the private man debating with the public man, and the natural sentiments of his heart grappling with his pride and the dignity of his position. In the un-guardedness of intimacy, he showed himself not indifferent to the unfortunate Prince's fate; but as soon as it was a question of the public, it was altogether another thing. One day, after having spoken to me of the fate and youth of the unfortunate man, he ended by saying: – "And I have learnt since, my dear friend, that he regarded me favorably; they tell me he never spoke of me without admiration; and yet this is the justice handed out down here!" – And these latter words were spoken with a significant expression, all the lines of his features appearing so harmonious, that if the man Napoleon pitied had been in his power at that moment, I am quite sure that, whatever his intentions and acts had been, he would have been pardoned with ardor...The Emperor was accustomed to consider that affair under two quite distinct headings: that of common law or established justice, and that of natural law or a violent lapse.*

*Between us and in confidence, the Emperor said that the fault, at root, could be attributed to an excess of zeal in those around him, or to private designs, or ultimately to mysterious intrigues. He said that he been under unexpected pressure, that his thoughts had been so to speak taken by surprise, his action precipitated, the outcome pre-determined. "Assuredly," he said, "if I had been made aware at the time of certain particulars concerning the Prince's nature and opinions; if above all I had seen the letter he wrote to me which was not passed to me, God knows with what motive, until after he was no more, I should certainly have pardoned him." And it was easy for us to see that his nature and feelings alone dictated these words of the Emperor, and to us alone; for he would have felt himself humiliated that anyone could believe for an instant that he sought to blame others, or descended to self-justification; his fear in that regard, or his susceptibility, was such that in speaking to strangers or dictating for the public on this subject, he restrained himself from declaring that, if he had known about the Prince's letter, perhaps he would have pardoned him, seeing the great political advantages that he could have accrued from doing so; and, tracing his last thoughts with his own hand, which he assumed must be sacred to his contemporaries and posterity, he pronounces on this subject, which he regards as one of the most delicate in his memoirs, that if it was to do again, he would still do it.'*

This passage, like the writer, shows all the signs of perfect sincerity; it is fine up to the phrase in which Monsieur le Comte de Las-Cases declares that Bonaparte would have pardoned with ardor a man who was not guilty. But his leader's theories are subtleties by the aid of which he tries hard to reconcile the irreconcilable. In drawing a distinction between *common law or established justice, and natural law or a violent lapse*, Napoleon appears to accept a sophism which, at heart, he does not accept; he could not subdue his conscience in the way in which he had subdued the world. A natural weakness of both superior and lesser men who have committed a crime is to wish it to be taken for an act of genius, a vast complexity that the vulgar cannot understand. Pride says these things, and stupidity believes them. Bonaparte doubtless regarded as the mark of a dominant spirit that sentence which he churned out with the self-importance of a great man: "*My dear friend, and yet this is the justice handed out down here!*" True philosophic tenderness! What impartiality! How readily it justifies, in laying to destiny's account the evil which derives from we ourselves! Nowadays they think everything is excused when they cry: '*What*

*can one do? It was my nature, it was human infirmity.*’ When one has killed one’s father, one reiterates: ‘*I was made that way!*’ And the crowd stand with gaping mouths, and they feel the bumps of this mighty skull and recognize that it was made that way! And what does it matter to me that you are made that way! Must I submit to the manner of your being? The world would be in a fine state of chaos, if all the men who were *made that way*, happened to wish to impose their will on one another. When they cannot remove their errors, they deify them; they make a dogma of their wrongs, they change their sacrilege to religion, and think themselves apostates if they renounce the cult of their iniquities.

## BOOK XVI

### CHAPTER 9

What should be concluded from all this – Enmities created by the death of the Duc d'Enghien

A grave lesson can be drawn from Bonaparte's life. Two actions, both wrong, began and brought about his fall: the death of the Duc d'Enghien, and the war with Spain. It was no good him passing on in all his glory, they remained there to ruin him. His destruction came from the very direction in which he thought himself strong, profound, invincible, by violating the laws of morality in his disregard for them, scorning his true strength, that is to say, his superior talent for order and justice. As long as he only attacked anarchy and France's foreign enemies, he was victorious; he found himself stripped of his power as soon as he entered on the paths of corruption: the hair that Delilah cut represents nothing else but the loss of virtue. Every crime carries within itself a radical incapacity and the seed of tragedy: let us practice goodness to be happy, and let us be just to be clever.

In proof of that truth, note that at the very moment of the Prince's death, the dissent began which, coming about through ill luck, led to the fall of the perpetrator of the tragedy of Vincennes. The Russian cabinet, in regard to the Duc d'Enghien's arrest, made vigorous representations concerning the violation of Imperial territory: Bonaparte felt the blow, and responded in the *Moniteur*, in a violent article that mentioned the death of Paul I. At Saint Petersburg, a memorial service was celebrated for the young Condé. The cenotaph read: '*To the Duc d'Enghien quem devoravit bellua Corsica (whom the Corsican monster devoured).*' The two powerful adversaries subsequently appeared to achieve reconciliation; but the mutual breach that politics had made and that insult widened, still remained: Napoleon did not think himself revenged until he had slept in Moscow; Alexander was not satisfied until he entered Paris.

The hatred shown by the Berlin cabinet rose from the same origin: I have mentioned Monsieur de Laforest's noble letter, in which he told Monsieur de Talleyrand of the effect of the Duc d'Enghien's murder on the court at Potsdam. Madame de Staël was in Prussia when the news of Vincennes arrived: '*I was staying in Berlin,*' she says, '*on the bank of the Spree and my apartment was on the ground floor. One morning, at eight, I was woken to be told that Prince Louis-Ferdinand was on horseback by my window, and requested that I come and speak with him. – Do you know, he said to me, that the Duc d'Enghien has been abducted from the territory of Baden, taken before a military commission, and shot twenty-four hours after arriving in Paris? – What foolishness! I replied; don't you realize that enemies of France have circulated this rumor? In truth, I confess, my hatred, fierce as it was of Bonaparte, did not go as far as allowing me to believe in the possibility of such a thing. – Since you doubt what I say, Prince Louis replied, I will go and fetch the Moniteur, in which you can read the judgment. With these words, he departed, and the expression on his face spoke of vengeance or death. A quarter of an hour afterwards, I had the Moniteur of 22nd March (1st Germinal) in my hands, which contained the sentence of death, pronounced by the military commission meeting at Vincennes, on the person named Louis d'Enghien! It is thus that the French designate the scions of heroes who brought their country glory! If one is to abjure all prejudice in favor of illustrious birth, which the return of monarchical form would necessarily entail, is one nevertheless to blaspheme thus against the memories of the battle of Lens and that of Rocroi? This Bonaparte who has gained victories does not even know how to respect them; for him there is neither past nor future; his imperious and scornful soul wishes to recognize no opinion as sacred; he only shows respect for direct forces. Prince Louis wrote to me, beginning his note with these words: – The person named Louis of Prussia, requests of Madame de Stael, etc. – He felt deeply the injury done to the royal*

*line of which he sprang, to the memory of those heroes he longed to emulate. How, after this terrible deed, can a single king in Europe deal with such a man? Necessity, they say? There is a sanctuary of the soul which his empire must never penetrate; if it were not so, what would virtue amount to on earth? A liberal amusement only fit for the peaceful leisure hours of private men.'*

This resentment of the Prince's, for which he had to pay with his life, was still there when the Prussian Campaign opened in 1806. Frederick-William, in his declaration of the 9th of October, said: '*The Germans have not avenged the death of the Duc d'Enghien; but among them the memory of that loss will never be effaced.*'

These historical details, little noted, merit being so; since they explain enmities which one would otherwise find difficult to explain, and they reveal at the same time those degrees by which Providence leads a man's destiny from crime to punishment.

## BOOK XVI

### CHAPTER 10

#### An article in *Le Mercure* – The change in Bonaparte's existence

Fortunately, at least, my life was not troubled by anxiety, nor touched by infection, nor lead by others' example! The satisfaction I feel today regarding what I did then, proves to me that conscience is not an illusion. Happier than all those potentates, than all those nations falling at the feet of the glorious soldier, I re-read with justified pride that page which remains as my sole possession, and which I owe only to myself. In 1807, my heart still stirred by that murder I have spoken of, I wrote these lines; they caused the suppression of *Le Mercure* and again threatened my liberty.

*'When, in the silence of abjection, the only sound one hears is that of the slave's chains and the informer's voice; when all tremble before the tyrant, and it is as dangerous to incur his favor as to merit his censure, the historian appears, entrusted with the wrath of nations. Nero prospers in vain, Tacitus has already been born within the Empire; he grows up unknown beside the ashes of Germanicus, and already a just Providence has delivered the glory of a master of the world into the hands of an obscure child. If the historian's role is fine, it is often dangerous; but it is altars like that of honor, which, though abandoned, still demand sacrifice; God is not annihilated because the temple is empty. Where there is a chance of success, there is no heroism in attempting it; magnanimous actions are those whose anticipated result is adversity or death. After all what do reverses matter if our name, pronounced by posterity, causes a generous heart to beat two thousand years after our death?'*

The death of the Duc d'Enghien, by introducing a new principle into Bonaparte's conduct, warped his true understanding: he was obliged to adopt, as a shield, rules of conduct whose real application was not at his disposal, since he incessantly bent them to suit his fame and genius. He became an object of suspicion; he created fear; confidence in him and his destiny was lost; he was forced to meet, if not seek out, men he would never have met with before, and who, by his action, thought themselves his equals; the taint of their contagion touched him. He did not dare to reproach them, since he no longer possessed the virtue or freedom to cast blame. His great qualities remained intact, but his good inclinations altered and no longer supported those great qualities; with the corruption represented by that first stain, his character deteriorated. God commanded his angels to disturb the harmony of that universe, to change its laws, to tilt its poles. As Milton wrote:

*'They with labor push'd  
Oblique the centric globe... the sun  
Was bid turn reins from th'equinoctial road  
.....(winds)  
...rend the woods, and seas upturn.'*

BOOK XVI  
CHAPTER 11  
Chantilly Deserted

Will Bonaparte's ashes be disinterred as those of the Duc d'Enghien have been? If I could have my way, that latter victim would still sleep without honors in the moat of the Castle of Vincennes. That *excommunicate* would have been left, like Raymond of Toulouse, in an open coffin; no man's hand would have dared to hide the sight of a witness to the incomprehensible judgement and wrath of God beneath a plank. The forsaken skeleton of the Duc d'Enghien and Napoleon's lonely grave on St Helena would have made a fine pair: there could have been no more fitting a commemoration than those remains, opposing each other, at the ends of the earth.

At least, the Duc d'Enghien does not rest on foreign soil, like the exiled of nations: the latter took care to return his country to the former, somewhat cruelly it is true; but will it be so forever? France (as so much of the dust winnowed by the Revolution's breath testifies) is not loyal to remains. The elder Condé, in his will, declares *that he is not sure what country he will inhabit on the day of his death*. O Bossuet! What could you not have added to your eloquent masterpiece, if, speaking of the Great Condé's grave, you had been able to foresee the future!

It is here, at Chantilly, that the Duc d'Enghien was born: Louis-Antoine-Henri de Bourbon, born the 2nd of August 1772 at Chantilly, says the death sentence. On this lawn he played as a child: the traces of his footsteps have vanished. And the victor of Freiburg, Nördlingen, Lens and Seneff, where has he gone with his *victorious hands now lifeless*? And his descendants, the Condé of Johannisberg and Berstheim; his son and his grandson, where are they? That château, those gardens, those fountains *silent neither by day nor night*: what has become of them? The mutilated statues, the lions with a claw or jaw restored; the trophies sculpted on a crumbling wall; the coats of arms with faded fleur-de-lis; the foundations of razed turrets; marble coursers above empty stables no longer animated by the neighing of the charger of Rocroi; a tall unfinished gate beside the riding-school: that is what remains of the memories of a heroic race; a will hanging by a rope altered the ownership of the inheritance.

On various occasions the whole forest has fallen under the axe. People of past days have hunted these chases, silent today, once so full of noise. What age were they, and what were their feelings, when they halted at the foot of these oaks? What day-dreams occupied them? O my useless *Memoirs*, I could not say to you now:

*'May Condé read you at Chantilly now and then;  
May Enghien be moved!'*

Obscure men, what are we besides those famous men? We will vanish, never to return: you will be reborn, *oeillet de poète*, sweet-william that lies on my table beside this paper, you, whose little late flower I have picked among the heather; but we, we shall not live again like the scented solitary that has distracted me.

**End of Book XVI**



## BOOK XVII

### CHAPTER 1

The year 1804 – I take up residence in the Rue de Miromesnil – Verneuil  
Alexis de Tocqueville – Le Mesnil – Mézy - Méréville

From this point on, removed from active life, but nevertheless saved from Bonaparte's anger by Madame Bacciocchi's protection, I left my temporary lodgings in the Rue de Beaune, and went to live in the Rue de Miromesnil. The little house I rented has since been occupied by Monsieur de Lally-Tollendal and Madame D'Hénin, his *best beloved*, as they said in Diane de Poitiers' day. My small garden ended at a builder's yard, and next to my window was a tall poplar which Monsieur de Lally-Tollendal, in order to breathe less humid air, cut down himself with his broad hand, which he considered emaciated and transparent: one illusion followed another. The paved road then terminated at my door; further on, the road or street, climbed through a vague patch of land called *La Butte-Aux-Lapins*. La Butte-Aux-Lapins, with a scatter of isolated houses, adjoined the Tivoli Gardens on the right, where I had said goodbye to my brother before emigrating, and the Parc de Monceaux on the left. I often walked in that deserted park; the Revolution began there amidst the Duc d'Orléans orgies: its retreat had been embellished by marble nudes and imitation ruins, symbols of the foolhardy and debauched politics that caused France to be filled with prostitutes and debris.

I had nothing to do; at the very most I talked to the rabbits in the park, or chatted to a trio of rooks about the Duc d'Enghien, on the bank of an artificial stream hidden beneath a carpet of green moss. Divorced from my Alpine legation and my Roman friendships, as I had been separated suddenly from my London attachments, I did not know what to do with my imagination and feelings; every evening I set them to following the sun, but its rays could not carry them beyond the seas. I returned home and tried to sleep, to the rustling of my poplar.

Yet my resignation had added to my fame: a little courage always goes down well in France. Various members of Madame de Beaumont's former circle introduced me to unfamiliar châteaux.

Monsieur de Tocqueville, my brother's brother-in-law and tutor to my two orphaned nephews, lived in Madame de Senozan's country house: such legacies due to the scaffold were everywhere. There, I saw my nephews growing up alongside their three de Tocqueville cousins, of whom Alexis made one, the author of *De La Démocratie en Amérique*. He was more fortunate in Verneuil than I had been in Combourg. Was the last of fame I shall have seen unknown to his infancy? Alexis de Tocqueville has travelled a civilized America, while I visited its forests.

Verneuil has changed owners; it has become the possession of Madame de Saint-Fargeau, celebrated because of her father and the Revolution which adopted her as its daughter.

Near Mantes, at Mesnil, lived Madame de Rosanbo: my nephew, Louis de Chateaubriand, was married there later to Mademoiselle d'Orglandes, the niece of Madame de Rosanbo. The latter no longer parades her beauty round the lake and beneath the beech trees of that country house; she is gone. When I travelled from Verneuil to Mesnil, I passed Mézy en route: Madame de Mézy was romance withdrawn into virtue and maternal grief. If only her daughter, who fell from a window and broke her neck, had been able to fly

over the château, like the young quail we used to chase, and take refuge on Île-Belle, that happy island in the Seine: *Coturnix per stipulas pascens* (a quail feeding amongst the grasses)

On the other bank of the Seine, not far from Marais, Madame de Vintimille introduced me to Méréville. Méréville was an oasis created by the smile of a Muse, but one of those Muses whom Gallic poets call *learned Faeries*. Here the adventures of Blanca and Velléda were read before elegant generations, who, falling past one another like blossoms, hear today the complaints of my age.

Little by little my mind, tired of idleness, in my Rue de Miromesnil, found distant phantoms forming. Le Génie du Christianisme inspired me with the thought of demonstrating the truth of that work, by mingling together Christian and mythological characters. A shade, whom, much later, I named Cymodocée, sketched itself in my mind: not a feature was missing. One day, having divined the presence of Cymodocée I shut myself up with her, as always happens with the daughters of my imagination; but before they may leave that state of reverie, and arrive at the banks of the Lethe through the Gate of Ivory, they often change their form. If I have created them through love, I have unmade them through love, and the unique and beloved object I later reveal to the light is the product of a thousand infidelities.

I only stayed in the Rue de Miromesnil for a year, since the house was sold. I came to an arrangement with Madame la Marquise de Coislin, who rented me an attic room in her hôtel, on the Place Louis XV.

## BOOK XVII

### CHAPTER 2

Madame de Coislin

Madame de Coislin was a very old lady. At nearly eighty, her proud and dominating gaze expressed wit and irony. Madame de Coislin was not well read and gloried in it; she had passed through the age of Voltaire without knowing it; if she had any idea of it at all, it was as a period of bourgeois chatter. It was not that she ever spoke about her noble birth; she was too superior to stoop to anything so ridiculous; she knew very well how to view the little people without being derogatory; but after all, she was the offspring of the premier Marquis in France. If she was descended from Drogon de Nesle, killed in Palestine in 1096; from Raoul de Nesle, Constable, knighted by Louis IX; of Jean II de Nesle, Regent of France during Saint Louis' last crusade, Madame de Coislin affirmed that it was a quirk of fate for which she should not be considered responsible; she was naturally of the Court, as others, happier ones, are of the street, just as one is a racing mare or a coach horse: she could do nothing about that accident of birth, and its use to her was to enable her to withstand the suffering with which it had pleased heaven to afflict her. Did Madame de Coislin have relations with Louis XV? She never confessed it to me: yet she admitted that she had been greatly loved, though she pretended to have treated the royal lover with the greatest severity. 'I have seen him at my feet,' she told me, 'he had charming eyes and the language of a seducer. One day he proposed to give me a porcelain washstand like the one which Madame de Pompadour possessed. – "Ah! Sire," I cried, *'that will do for hiding beneath!'*"

By an odd chance, I met with this washstand again in London at the home of the Marchioness of Conyngham; she had received it from George IV, and she showed it to me with a charming simplicity. Madame de Coislin lived in a room of her hotel opening beneath the colonnade which matches the colonnade of the Garde-Meuble. Two seascapes by Vernet, which Louis the Well-Beloved had given the noble lady, were hung in front of an old tapestry of greenish satin. Madame de Coislin remained, resting, until two in the afternoon, sitting up, supported by pillows, in a vast bed with curtains of a similar green silk; a sort of nightcap badly pinned to her head allowed her grey hair to escape. Diamond ear-rings, mounted in the old style, fell to the shoulders of her bed-jacket, which was sprinkled with snuff in the manner of fashionable people during the Fronde. Around her, on the covers, lay a shoal of envelopes, separated from their letters, on which envelopes Madame de Coislin wrote her thoughts, at all angles: she never bought paper: her post furnished her with it. From time to time, a little bitch called Lili stuck its nose out from beneath the sheets, barked for five minutes or so and retreated grumbling into its mistress's 'kennel'. Thus time had dealt with Louis XV's young love.

Madame de Châteauroux and her sisters were cousins of Madame de Coislin: the latter would not have been of the mood, as Madame de Mailly was, as a Christian repentant, to reply to a man who insulted her using a coarse expression in the Saint-Roch church: *'My friend, since you know me, pray to God for me.'* Madame de Coislin, avaricious, like many spirited people, crammed her money into cupboards. She lived gnawed at by a swarm of coins which stuck to her skin: her people relieved her of them.

When I found her plunged inextricably in calculations, she reminded me of the miser Hermocrates, who when dictating his will had himself declared as his own heir. Yet she gave dinners randomly; though she

moaned about the coffee which, according to her, no one liked, and which was only there to eke out the meal.

Madame de Chateaubriand took a trip to Vichy with Madame de Coislin and the Marquis de Nesle; the Marquis rode on ahead and had an excellent dinner prepared. Madame de Coislin followed on behind, and asked for nothing but a half-pound of cherries; the host maintained that whether one ate or not, it was customary, at an inn, to pay for the meal.

Madame de Coislin, embraced spirituality when she wished. Credulous and incredulous, her lack of faith led her to mock beliefs of which she was superstitiously afraid. She had met Madame de Krüdner; the secretive Frenchwoman was only spiritually enlightened as to the benefit of possessions; she did not please the fervent Russian, who agreed with her not at all. Madame de Krüdner said to Madame de Coislin, with passion: '*Madame, who is your confessor within?*' – '*Madame,*' replied Madame de Coislin, '*I know nothing of any confessor within; I know only that my confessor is within his confessional.*' After that, the two ladies no longer had anything to do with each other.

Madame de Coislin was proud of having introduced a novelty to court, a fashion for loose chignons, despite the very pious Queen Marie Leczinska, who was opposed to that dangerous innovation. She maintained that in the past a person who was *comme il faut* would be advised never to pay their doctor. Exclaiming about the abundance of female lingerie: '*It smacks of the upstart;*' she said, '*we others, ladies of the court, only had two chemises; we replaced them when they were worn out; we were clothed in silk robes, and lacked the air of working class girls young ladies possess today.*'

Madame Suard, who lived on the Rue Royale, had a cockerel whose crowing, across the inner courtyard, bothered Madame de Coislin. She wrote to Madame Suard: '*Madame, wring your cockerel's neck.*' Madame Suard returned the message with a note: '*Madame, I have the honor to reply that I will not wring my cockerel's neck.*' The correspondence rested there. Madame de Coislin said to Madame de Chateaubriand: '*Ah! Goodness me, what times we live in! She's only the daughter of Panckoucke, the wife of a Member of the Academy, you know.*'

Monsieur Hennin, a former clerk in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who was as boring as a book of etiquette, scribbled long novels. One day he was reading a descriptive passage to Madame de Coislin: a lover forsaken and in tears, was fishing, in a state of melancholy, for salmon. Madame de Coislin, who was impatient and did not like salmon, interrupted the author and said to him with that air of seriousness that rendered her so comical: '*Monsieur Hennin, could you not have him catch another kind of fish for that lady?*'

The stories Madame de Coislin told cannot be re-captured, because there was nothing in the content; everything was in the mimicry, the tone, and the manner of the speaker: she never laughed. There was a conversation between Monsieur and Madame Jacqueminot whose perfection outdid everything. When, during the conversation between the two, Madame Jacqueminot replied: '*But Monsieur Jacqueminot!*' the name was pronounced in such a way that one was seized by wild laughter. Obligated to let it die down, Madame de Coislin waited gravely, while taking snuff.

Reading in a newspaper of the death of several kings, she removed her glasses, and said, while blowing her nose: *'There is an epidemic among these crowned creatures.'*

At the moment when she was ready for death, someone at her bedside maintained that one only succumbed because one allowed oneself to; that if one was truly attentive and never lost sight of the enemy, one would not die: *'I believe it,'* she said, *'but I am afraid I am becoming distracted.'* She expired.

I went down to her room the following morning; I found Monsieur and Madame d'Avaray, her sister and brother-in-law, sitting by the hearth, a small table between them, counting coins from a purse they had taken from a hole in the paneling. The poor dead woman was there on the bed, the curtains half-drawn: she could not hear the sound of the gold which ought to have woken her, counted by fraternal hands.

Among the *pensées* which the departed had written, on the margins of letters and their envelopes, some were of great beauty. Madame de Coislin had revealed to me what remained of Louis XV's court, under Bonaparte, when the days of Louis XVI were done, as Madame d'Houdetot had revealed what was still left to us, in the nineteenth century, of her society of philosophers.

## BOOK XVII

### CHAPTER 3

A journey to Vichy, through Auvergne, to Mont-Blanc

In the summer of 1805, I rejoined Madame de Chateaubriand at Vichy, where Madame de Coislin had conducted her, as I have said. I discovered no sign of Jussac, Termes and Flammarens, whom Madame de Sévigné found preceding and following her, in 1677; for a hundred or twenty years and more they had been sleeping. I left my sister, Madame de Caud, behind in Paris, where she had been living since the spring of 1804. After a short stay at Vichy, Madame de Chateaubriand suggested to me that we travel in order to be absent during a period of political trouble.

In my collected works are two small *Voyages* which I then made through Auvergne and to Mont-Blanc. After thirty-four years away, people, strangers to me, have just welcomed me at Clermont as one greets an old friend. He who concerns himself with principles that the human race enjoys communally, has brothers, sisters and friends in every family: for if man is ungrateful, humanity shows gratitude. To those who feel bound to you by your kindly reputation, and who have never met you, you are always the same; you always possess the age they have attributed to you; their feeling for you, which is not troubled by your presence, always sees you as young and handsome, like the sentiments they admire in your writings.

When I was a child, in Brittany, and heard talk of the Auvergne, I imagined it as a far, far country, where one would see strange things, which one could not visit without great peril, travelling under the protection of the Holy Virgin. It is not without a kind of sympathetic curiosity that I encounter little Auvergnats who go seeking their fortunes in this wide world with a little fir-wood casket. They have hardly anything but hope in their box, as they descend from their rocky heights; happy if they return with it!

Alas! Madame de Beaumont had been resting on the banks of the Tiber for nearly two years, when I trod her native soil, in 1805; I was only a few miles from Mont Dore, where she came seeking that lease of life she extended a little in reaching Rome. Last summer, in 1838, I travelled through that very same Auvergne again. Between those dates, 1805 and 1838, I could detect a transformation in the society around me.

We left Clermont, and, returning to Lyons, passed through Thiers and Roanne. This route, then little frequented, follows the banks of the Lignon, here and there. The author of L'Astrée who is not a great spirit, nevertheless invented places and people who are alive; so much fiction when it is appropriate to the age in which it appears has creative power! Moreover there is ingenious fantasy in that resurrection of nymphs and naiads mingling with shepherds, ladies and knights: those varied worlds go well together, and one readily accepts mythological fables joined with the inventions of the novel: Rousseau has mentioned how he was deceived by d'Urfé.

At Lyons, we met Monsieur Ballanche again; he made the trip to Geneva and Mont-Blanc with us. He went everywhere he was taken, without having the slightest business there. At Geneva, I was welcomed at the town gate, but not by Clotilde, Clovis' fiancée: Monsieur de Barante, the father, had been appointed Prefect of Léman. I went to Coppet to see Madame de Staël; I found her alone in the depths of her château, which embraced a gloomy courtyard. I spoke to her of her wealth and solitude, as precious means of maintaining independence and happiness; I pained her. Madame de Staël loved society; she

regarded herself as the most unfortunate of women, in an exile with which I would have been delighted. What misfortune could it be, in my eyes, to live on her estate, with all the comforts of life? What pain could it be to have glory, leisure, peace, in a fertile retreat with a view of the Alps, given the thousands of victims without bread, fame, or support, banished to the four corners of Europe, while their relatives died on the scaffold? It is wretched to suffer from an evil of which the crowd knows nothing. Moreover this evil is only the sharper in that it is not diminished by confrontation with other evils, one cannot judge another's pain; what is an affliction to one person is a joy to another; hearts hold their separate secrets, incomprehensible to other hearts. Let us not dispute their sufferings with anyone; sorrows are like countries, everyone has their own.

Madame de Staël visited Madame de Chateaubriand the following day in Geneva, and we left for Chamonix. My opinion regarding mountainous landscapes has caused it to be said that I was seeking to draw attention to myself; there is nothing in that idea. You will see when I speak of Saint-Gothard, that my opinion is unchanged. You can read in the *Journey to Mont-Blanc*, a passage which I will repeat here as tying together past events of my life with those that still lay in the future, and which today are equally past.

*'There is only one circumstance in which it might be true that mountains inspire forgetfulness of earthly troubles: that is when one retires far from the world to dedicate oneself to religion. An anchorite who devotes himself to the service of humanity, a saint who wishes to meditate on God's grandeur in silence, can find joy and peace among wildernesses of stone; but then it is not the tranquility of those places that occupies the souls of those solitaries, on the contrary, their souls spread serenity in a region of storms.....'*

*'There are mountains nevertheless which I would still visit with extreme delight: those of Greece and Judea. I would love to travel the places which my latest studies force me to occupy each day; I would willingly go and find, on Thabor or Taygetus, different colors, different harmonies, having painted the nameless mountains and unknown valleys of the New World.'* That final phrase announced the journey I undertook in reality the following year, 1806.

On our return to Geneva, without having been able to see Madame de Staël again at Coppet, we found the inns full. Without the help of Monsieur de Forbin, who appeared and secured us a wretched dinner in a dark ante-chamber, we would have left Rousseau's homeland without eating. Monsieur de Forbin was then in a state of bliss; he displayed in his glances the internal joy which filled him; he floated above the earth. Buoyed up by his talent and his felicity, he descended from the mountain as if from heaven, his painter's smock like a leotard, his thumb through his palette, and his paintbrushes in a quiver. A fine fellow nevertheless, despite his excessive happiness, he was preparing to imitate me one day, when I should make a journey to Syria, even wishing to travel as far as Calcutta, to re-awaken love by extraordinary means, since he had lost it on the beaten track. His eyes revealed patronizing pity; I was poor, humble, somewhat unsure of myself, and I did not hold the hearts of princesses in my powerful hands. In Rome, I have had the good fortune to repay Monsieur de Forbin his lakeside dinner; I had the merit then of having become an ambassador. At that time, he met once more, king for an evening, the poor devil he had left behind in the street one morning.

The noble gentleman, a painter by command of the Revolution, led that generation of artists who present themselves as sketches, grotesques, caricatures. Some wear fearful moustaches, as if they were off to conquer the world; their brushes are halberds, their scrapers are sabres; others have enormous beards, their hair hanging down or puffed up; they smoke cigars disguised as volcanoes. These *cousins of the rainbow*, as old Régnier called them, have their heads full of floods, seas, rivers, forests, waterfalls, tempests or massacres, torments and scaffolds. In their rooms are human skulls, fencing foils, mandolins, Spanish helmets and Turkish robes. Boastful, enterprising, rude, generous (as to touching up the portraits of tyrants they paint), they aim to form a species apart somewhere between monkey and satyr; they are determined to have it understood that the secrets of the studio have their risks, and that there is no safety for models. But how they make amends for these follies by their exalted existence, their suffering and feeling nature, a complete abnegation of self, an uncalculated devotion to the miseries of others, a manner of feeling delicate, superior, idealistic, a fierce poverty welcomed and nobly sustained: finally, on occasions by immortal talent, sons of work, passion, genius and solitude!

Leaving Geneva at night to return to Lyons, we were stopped at the foot of Fort L'Écluse, while waiting for the gates to open. During this halt of Macbeth's witches among the heather, strange things were happening within me. My past years revived and surrounded me like a crowd of phantoms; my burning seasons returned in their sorrow and flame. My life, made void by the death of Madame de Beaumont, remained empty: aerial forms, dreams or houris, escaping from that abyss, took me by the hand and led me back to the days of my *sylph*. I was no longer among the places I inhabited, I revisited other shores. Some secret influence urged me towards Aurora's realm, to which the plan of my latest work and the voice of religion drew me, waking again the vow of that villager, my nurse. Since all my faculties had been developed, since I had never abused life, it was over-abundantly filled with the sap of my intellect, and art, triumphant in my nature, added to the inspirations of a poet. I had what the Desert Fathers of the Thebaid called *ascents* of the heart. Raphael, (if one will forgive the blasphemy of the comparison), Raphael, in front of *The Transfiguration* as yet only a sketch on his easel, could not have been more electrified by his masterpiece than I by that Eudore and that Cymodocée, whose name I did not yet know and whose image I glimpsed through an atmosphere of love and glory.

So the native genius that troubled me in my cradle, sometimes retraces its steps after having abandoned me; so my former sufferings are renewed; nothing is healed in me; if my wounds close instantaneously, they suddenly re-open like those of the crucifixes of the Middle Ages, which bleed on the anniversary of the Passion. I have no other resource, to ease me during these crises, than to allow free rein to the fever in my thoughts, just as one pierces a vein when blood rushes to the heart or mounts to the head. But what do I speak of? O religion, where then is your power, your curb, your balm! Is it as though I had not written any of those works of the innumerable years since the hour when I yielded the day to René? I had a thousand reasons to believe myself dead, and I live! It is a great sorrow. These afflictions of the lonely poet, condemned to suffer the spring despite Saturn, are unknown to those who are never far from communal existence; for them, the years are always young: '*Now the young kids,*' writes Oppian, '*watch over the author of their being; when the latter falls prey to the hunter's net, they offer him sweet flowery grass in their mouths, which they have gathered from afar, and carry fresh water, drawn from the nearby stream, to his lips.*'



## BOOK XVII

### CHAPTER 4

#### Return to Lyons

On returning to Lyons, I found letters from Monsieur Joubert: they told me of the impossibility of his being at Villeneuve before the month of September. I replied: *‘Your departure from Paris is too far-off, and bothers me; you know that my wife would never wish to arrive at Villeneuve before you: also she has a mind of her own, and since she is with me, I find myself minding two minds that are very difficult to manage. We will stay at Lyons, where they make us eat so prodigiously that I scarcely have the courage to leave this excellent town. The Abbé de Bonnevie is here, having returned from Rome; he is marvelously well; he is cheerful, he sermonizes; he no longer thinks of his misfortunes; he embraces you and will write to you. At last the whole world is joyful, except me; it is only you who grumble. Tell Fontanes that I have dined with Monsieur Saget.’*

This Monsieur Saget was the patron of canons; he lived on the hill of Sainte-Foye, in a region of fine vineyards. One ascended to his house more or less by way of the place where Rousseau spent the night by the banks of the Saône.

*‘I have often spent a delightful night,’* he writes, *‘near the town on a path that borders the Saône. Gardens raised in terraces lined the path on the opposite side: it was so warm in those days: the evenings were charming, dew dampened the withered grass; no breeze, the tranquil night; the air was fresh without being cold; the setting sun had left red clouds behind in the sky, whose reflections turned the water a rose color; the trees on the terraces were filled with nightingales who replied to one another. I walked along in a sort of ecstasy, giving over my heart and senses to the pleasure of it all, and only sighing a little in regret at enjoying it alone. Absorbed in my sweet reverie, I extended my walks far into the night, without realizing that I was tired. At last I did realize it: I lay down voluptuously on the ledge of a sort of niche or false doorway, let into the wall of a terrace: the roof of my bed was formed by the tops of the trees, a nightingale was perched exactly above me; I fell asleep to its singing: my rest was sweet; my awakening more so. It was a fine day: my gaze, on opening my eyes, fell on water, greenery, a delightful countryside.’*

Rousseau’s charming itinerary in hand, one arrived at Monsieur Saget’s residence. This lean and ancient fellow, married long ago, wore a green cap, a grey woolen coat, nankeen trousers, blue stockings and beaver shoes. He had lived for many years in Paris and had a relationship with Mademoiselle Devienne. She wrote him very spiritual letters, scolded him and gave him excellent advice: he took no heed, since he refused to take the world seriously, apparently believing like the Mexicans that the world had already experienced four suns, and that during the fourth (which lights us at the moment) men had been changed into apes. He jeered at the martyrdoms of Saint Pothin and Saint Irénée, at the massacre of Protestants in ranks side by side by order of Mandelot, the Governor of Lyons, all their throats being cut in the same way. Regarding the killing field of Les Brotteaux, he told me the details, while walking among his vines, enlivening his tale with lines from Loyse Labbé: he had not missed a blow during the late executions at Lyons, under the Charte-Vérité.

On certain days, at Sainte-Foye, they laid on a particular meal of calf’s-head marinated for five days, cooked in Madeira wine and stuffed with exquisite ingredients; very pretty young peasant girls served at

table; they poured excellent vintage wine, cellared in demi-johns with a capacity of three bottles. We collapsed, I and the chapter in cassocks, beneath the weight of Saget's dinner: the hall was black with them.

Our *dapifer* (master of the feast) quickly came to the end of his provisions: among the ruins of his last moments, he was taken in by two or three of his former mistresses who had plundered him throughout his life, 'a species of woman,' said Saint Cyprian, 'who live as if they may be loved, quae sic vivis ut possis adamari.'

## BOOK XVII

### CHAPTER 5

#### Trip to the Grande-Chartreuse

We dragged ourselves away from Capuan luxuries to go and see La Chartreuse, still accompanied by Monsieur Ballanche. We hired a carriage whose decrepit wheels made a lamentable noise. Arriving at Voreppe, we stayed in an inn at the top of the village. Next day at daybreak, we mounted horses and departed, preceded by a guide. At the village of Saint-Laurent, at the foot of the Grand-Chartreuse, we entered the gateway to the valley, and followed the track, flanked by rock on both sides, which climbed up to the monastery. I have spoken, regarding Combours, of what I experienced here. The deserted buildings crumbled away beneath the gaze of a sort of keeper of ruins. A lay brother had been installed there, to take care of an infirm solitary who had gone there to die: religion had taxed friendship with loyalty and obedience. We came upon the narrow grave which had been newly filled: Napoleon, at this moment, was off to dig an immense grave at Austerlitz. We were shown the monastery wall, the cells, each with a garden and a workshop, where the carpentry benches and wood-turners' lathes were pointed out to us: the chisel had fallen from the hand. A gallery offered portraits of the superiors of Chartreuse. The Ducal Palace at Venice holds the rest of the *ritratti* (portraits) of the Doges; places and relics far apart! Some distance higher up, we were conducted to the chapel of Le Sueur's immortal recluse.

After dining in a vast kitchen, we set off again and met Monsieur Chaptal, carried in a palanquin like a rajah, he was a former apothecary, then senator, afterwards owner of Chanteloupe and inventor of sugar-beet processing, eager heir of the sweet 'Indian reeds' of Sicily, perfected by the sun of Tahiti. Descending through the woods, I thought about the former coenobites; through the centuries, they carried fir saplings and a little earth in a fold of their robes, which became trees among the rocks. Happy, O you who journey silently through the world, and never turn your heads as you go by!

We had no sooner reached the entrance to the valley when a storm broke; a deluge fell, and raging torrents hurtled roaring from every ravine. Madame de Chateaubriand, rendered intrepid by the strength of her fear, galloped through water, stones and lightning flashes. She had thrown away her umbrella in order to hear the thunder better; the guide shouted: '*Commend your souls to God, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!*' We arrived at Voreppe to the sound of the alarm bell; the scattered remains of the storm arrived before us. Far off among the fields you could see fire in a village, and the moon showed the upper part of its disc above the clouds, like the bald and pallid head of Saint Bruno, founder of the silent Order. Monsieur Ballanche, disgustingly wet with rain, said, with his unalterable placidity: '*I am like a fish underwater.*' I have just revisited Voreppe this year, 1838; there was no thunderstorm; but two witnesses of it remain, Madame de Chateaubriand and Monsieur Ballanche. I make the observation, because I have so often in these *Memoirs* noted those who are missing.

Returning to Lyons, we left our companion and travelled to Villeneuve. I have recounted to you what that little town was like, my walks and my regrets beside the Yonne with Monsieur Joubert. There, lived three old ladies, the Mesdemoiselles Piat; they reminded me of my grandmother's three friends at Plancoët, unlike, except in social position. The virgins of Villeneuve died, one after another, and I was reminded of them by a flight of grassy steps, which rose outside their deserted house. What did they talk of when they were alive, those village maidens? They spoke about their dog, about a muff their father had once bought at the fair in Sens. It interested me as much as did the Council in that very same town, at which Saint

Bernard condemned my compatriot Abelard. Perhaps the virgins of the muff were Héloïses; perhaps they had loved, and their letters discovered one day will enchant posterity. Who knows? Perhaps they too wrote to their master, also their father, also their brother, also their husband: *domino suo, imo patri*, etc. that they felt honored by the name of friend, of mistress or courtesan, *concubinae vel scorti* (concubine or whore). ‘*Despite his knowledge,*’ a learned doctor says, ‘*I find that Abelard possessed an admirable inclination to folly, when he seduced Héloïse his pupil.*’

## BOOK XVII

### CHAPTER 6

#### The death of Madame de Caud (Lucile)

The previous year a grave sorrow had surprised me at Villeneuve. In order to tell you of it, I must go back many months to a point prior to my Swiss journey. I was still living in the house in the Rue Miromesnil, when Madame de Caud came to Paris in the spring of 1804. Madame de Beaumont's death had finally unsettled my sister's reason; it was almost the case that she refused to believe in that death, suspecting some mystery in that disappearance, or including Heaven in the number of her enemies who took delight in her misfortunes. She possessed nothing: I had found her an apartment in the Rue Caumartin, deceiving her as to the cost of the place and the arrangements I had her make with a restaurant owner. Like a flame about to fade, her genius shed its brightest light; she was wholly illuminated by it. She would trace a few lines and throw them into the fire, or copy some thoughts in harmony with her spirit, from books. She did not remain in the Rue Caumartin; she went to live with the Augustines de la Congrégation Notre-Dame, in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Étienne: Madame de Navarre, an instructress, was to become the superior of that convent. Earlier when she had stayed with Les Dames de Saint-Michel, Lucile had a little cell overlooking the garden: I noticed that her eyes followed the nuns as they walked in the enclosure around the vegetable plots, with a kind of gloomy longing. One guessed she was envying the saints, and going further, aspired to be an angel. I will sanctify these *Memoirs* by depositing in them, as relics, these letters of Madame de Caud, written before she took flight for her eternal home.

‘17th of January.

*I rely on you and Madame de Beaumont for my happiness, with that thought I evade my ennui and my sorrows: my whole occupation is to love you. I have spent this night in lengthy reflections on your character and your mode of being. How close you and I always are, I believe it takes time to know me, so many the varied thoughts in my head, so greatly does my timidity and a sort of external weakness contrast with my interior strength! That is more than enough about me. My illustrious brother, receive my most tender thanks for all the kindnesses and marks of friendship you never cease to show me. This is the last letter from me which you will receive this morning. Even if I have told you a few of my thoughts, they are no less complete still within me.’*

Undated.

*‘Do you think I am truly safe, my friend, from any impertinence of Monsieur Chênédollé's? I am determined not to invite him to continue his visits; I am resigned to Tuesday's being the last. I no longer wish to trouble his courtesy. I close the book of my destiny forever, and seal it with the seal of reason; I will no longer consult its pages, now, regarding either the trifles or the important concerns of life. I completely renounce my foolish thoughts; I will neither occupy myself nor grieve myself with those of others; I will deliver myself headlong to all the events of my journey through this world. What matter about my attachment and how I am! God can no longer afflict me except regarding yourself. I thank Him for the fine, dear and precious gift of your person that He has granted me, and for having preserved my life without stain; these are all my treasures. I might take as an emblem of my life the moon in a cloud with this device: Often obscured, never tarnished. Adieu, my friend. Perhaps you will be astonished (by*

*the change) in my language since yesterday morning. Since seeing you, my heart has raised itself towards God once more, and I have placed it wholly at the foot of the cross, its only true situation.'*

*'Thursday.*

*Good day, my friend. What is the flavor of your ideas this morning? For myself, I recall that the only person who could reassure me when I feared for Madame de Farcy's life was the lady who said to me: "But it is in the nature of the possible that you will die before her." Could any reply be more just? There is nothing, my friend, like the idea of death to rid us of the future. I hasten to rid you of myself this morning, since I feel myself to be in too good spirits for saying beautiful things. Good day, my poor brother. Joy to you.'*

*Undated.*

*'When Madame de Farcy was alive, always being close to her, I did not see myself as needing to share my thoughts with anyone. I possessed that good without ever doubting it. But since we have lost that friend and circumstances have separated me from you, I have known the torment of being unable to relieve and revive its spirit in conversation with someone; I feel that my ideas are bad for me when I cannot rid myself of them; that is surely due to my poor constitution. However I am happy enough, since yesterday, with my courage. I pay no attention to my sorrow, and a sort of internal weakness that I experience. I am forsaken. Continue to be kind to me, always: it reveals your compassion these days. Good day, my friend. I will see you soon, I hope.'*

*Undated.*

*'Rest easy, my friend; my health is restored in the blink of an eye. I often ask myself why I have such need for support. I am like a mad woman who builds a fortress in the midst of a desert. Adieu, my poor brother.'*

*Undated.*

*'As I am suffering from a severe headache this evening, I am just going to write down quite simply, at random, some of Fénelon's thoughts for you in order to discharge my duty to you:*

*– "One is truly narrow when one withdraws within oneself. On the other hand, one is truly expansive when one quits that prison in order to enter into God's immensity."*

*– "We will soon find again what we have lost. We approach it every day at great pace. A little while and there will be nothing to weep over. It is we who die: what we love lives and dies not."*

*– "You are granted deceptive powers, such as an ardent fever grants during an illness. For days, you reveal a convulsive movement by means of which you demonstrate courage and gaiety, with a wealth of suffering."*

*This is all my head and my sorry pen allow me to write this evening. If you wish, I will begin again tomorrow and perhaps copy more for you. Good evening, my friend. I will never cease to tell you how my heart bows before that of Fénelon, whose tenderness seems so profound to me, his virtue so elevated. Good day, my friend.'*

*'I send you on waking a thousand tender thoughts and grant you a hundred blessings. I feel well this morning, and am anxious as to whether you will be able to write to me, and whether those thoughts of Fénelon will seem well-chosen to you. I fear lest my mind might be too disturbed.'*

*Undated.*

*'Would you imagine that I have occupied myself foolishly since yesterday correcting your work? The Blossacs, in greatest secrecy, have entrusted me with a novel of yours. Since I do not think you have turned your ideas to good advantage in this novel, I am amusing myself by trying to render them in all their power. Could one show greater audacity? Pardon me, great man, and recollect that I am your sister, and it is allowable for me to misuse your riches a little.'*

*'Saint-Michel.*

*I shall no longer speak to you: Do not come to me any more – because only having a few days left in Paris now, I feel that your presence is essential to me. Only come to me this afternoon at four; I expect to be out until then. My friend, I have in my head a thousand contradictory thoughts about things which seem to exist for me and not exist, which for me have the effect of objects that may merely be presenting themselves to me in a mirror, so that, in consequence, one cannot be certain exactly what one has seen. I do not wish to concern myself with all that; from this moment, I surrender myself. I have not, as you have, the ability to change shores, but I feel brave enough to attach no importance to people and things on the bank, and to concentrate entirely, irrevocably, on the Creator of all justice, and all truth. There is only one disagreeable thing which I fear makes dying difficult, that is to harm in passing, without wishing to, the destiny of another, not because of the interest that they might take in me; I am not foolish enough for that.'*

*'Saint-Michel.*

*My friend, the sound of your voice has never given me so much pleasure as when I heard it yesterday on my stair. My thoughts, then, sought to mount upon my courage. I was seized by a feeling of comfort at feeling you so near me; you appeared and all my inner self returned to a state of order. Sometimes I experience a great repugnance at heart when drinking of my chalice. How can that heart, which occupies so small a space, contain so much existence and so much sorrow? I am very dissatisfied with myself, very dissatisfied. My tasks and my thoughts drag me along; I hardly occupy myself with God any more, and yet I content myself with saying to Him a hundred times a day: – Lord, hasten to grant me peace, for my spirit has plunged into weariness.'*

*Undated.*

*'My brother, do not grow weary of my letters, or my company; consider that you will soon be free forever of my importunities. My life is shedding its last glow, a lamp that is expiring in the darkness of a long night, and that sees the dawn breaking in which it will die. I beg you, my brother, cast one glance back towards those first moments of our existence; remember that we have often been dandled on the same lap, and hugged together to the same breast; that you have already added your tears to mine, that from the earliest days of your life you have protected and defended my fragile existence, that our games united us and I shared your first studies. I will not speak to you of our adolescence, of the innocence of our thoughts and joys, of our mutual need to see each other unceasingly. If I retrace the past, I freely confess, my brother, it is to make myself live more deeply in your heart. When you left France for a second time, you entrusted your wife to me, you made me promise never to separate from her. Faithful to that dear duty, I held out my hands voluntarily to be manacled, and entered those prisons destined only for victims condemned to death. In those places, I felt no anxiety except as to your fate; I consulted the presentiments of my heart, endlessly. When I had recovered my freedom, in the midst of misfortunes that overwhelmed me, only the thought of our reunion sustained me. Now that I have lost forever the hope of spending my life at your side, suffer my sorrows. I will resign myself to my destiny, and it is only because I am still struggling with it, that I experience such cruel anguish; but when I have submitted to my fate.....And what a fate! Where are my friends, protectors, wealth! To whom does my existence matter: this existence abandoned by all, and which depends entirely on itself? My God! Are my present misfortunes not sufficient for my strength, without adding to them fear for the future? Forgive me, dear friend, I will resign myself; I will plunge in a deathlike sleep into my destiny. But during the few days that I have business in this city, let me seek my last solace in you; let me believe my company is dear to you. Believe that along the loving hearts, none approaches the sincerity and tenderness of my powerless friendship for you. Fill my memory with pleasant reminiscences that prolong my existence in proximity to you. Yesterday, when you spoke of my coming to your house, you seemed troubled and serious, though your words were affectionate. My brother, what if I should also be a subject of estrangement and tedium for you? You know it is not I who proposed to you the pleasant distraction of coming to see you, that I promised you never to abuse it; but if you have changed your mind, have you failed to be frank with me? I have no courage to oppose your courtesy. In the past, you distinguished me from the crowd somewhat, and rendered me more justice. Since you count on seeing me today, I will come and see you now at eleven. We shall decide together what will best suit us for the future. I have written to you, certain that I would not have had the courage to speak a single word to you of what this letter contains.'*

This letter so poignant and so wholly admirable is the last I received; it alarmed me by the deeper sadness with which it is imprinted. I hurried to see her; my sister was walking in the garden with Madame de Navarre; she came in again when she was told that I had gone up to her room. She made a visible effort to compose her ideas and at intervals she gave a slight convulsive movement of her lips. I begged her to be reasonable, not to write such unjust and heart-rending things to me, and to cease thinking that I could ever grow weary of her. She seemed to grow a little calmer at the words which I repeated to comfort and console her. She told me that she thought the convent was bad for her, that she would feel better in solitary lodgings, near the Jardin des Plantes, where she could see the doctors and go for walks. I urged her to follow her own wishes, adding that I would let her have old [Saint-Germain](#), to help [Virginie](#) her maid. This proposition seemed to give her great pleasure, as a reminder of Madame de Beaumont, and she assured me that she would attend to finding herself new lodgings. She asked me what I intended to do that summer: I told her that I would be going to Vichy to re-join my wife, then to Monsieur Joubert at Villeneuve, before returning to Paris. I suggested she might come with us. She replied that she wished to



spend the summer alone, and that she was even going to send Virginie back to Fougères. I left her; she was calmer.

Madame de Chateaubriand left for Vichy, and I prepared to follow her. Before quitting Paris, I went to see Lucile once more. She was affectionate; she spoke to me about her writings, beautiful fragments of which you have seen, in the third book of these *Memoirs*. I encouraged the great poet to work on them; she kissed me, wished me a safe journey, and made me promise to return soon. She saw me to the staircase landing, leant over the banisters, and quietly watched me descend. When I was down, I stopped, and raising my head, I called out to the unhappy woman who was still watching me: 'Adieu, dear sister! I will see you soon! Take good care of yourself. Write to me at Villeneuve. I will write to you. I hope you will agree to live with us, next winter.'

That evening, I saw the worthy Saint-Germain; I gave him his instructions and some money so that he could secretly reduce the cost of anything she might need. I committed him to keeping me informed of everything, and not to fail in calling me back if he had business with me. Three months elapsed. Arriving at Villeneuve, I found two quite reassuring notes concerning Madame de Caud's health; but Saint-Germain forgot to tell me of my sister's new lodging arrangements. I had begun to write a long letter to her, when Madame de Chateaubriand suddenly fell dangerously ill; I was at her bedside when I was brought a fresh letter from Saint-Germain; I opened it: a horrifying line told me of Lucile's sudden death.

I have cared for many graves in my life, but it was my fate and my sister's destiny to have her ashes committed to the will of Heaven. I was not in Paris at the moment of her death; I had no relatives there; forced to remain at Villeneuve by my wife's perilous condition, I could not attend to those sacred remains; and instructions from afar arrived too late to prevent a common burial. Lucile knew no one and had not a single friend; she was known only to Madame de Beaumont's old servant, as if he had been charged with linking their two fates. He alone followed the forsaken coffin, and he had died himself before Madame de Chateaubriand's sufferings allowed me to conduct her back to Paris.

My sister was buried among the poor: in which cemetery was she laid to rest? By what motionless wave of the ocean of dead was she engulfed? In what house did she die after leaving the convent? If by making enquiries, if in examining the municipal archives, and parish registers, I meet with my sister's name, what will that avail me? Would I find the same cemetery keeper? Will I discover the man who dug a grave that was left nameless and unrecorded? Would the rough hands that last touched such pure clay retain the memory? What nomenclature among the shades would show me the obliterated grave? Might he not be in error? Since Heaven has willed it so, let Lucile be lost forever! I find in this absence of knowledge of the place a distinction between it and the burial of my other friends. My predecessor, in this world and the next, is interceding for me with the Redeemer; she is praying to Him from among the remains of paupers with whom her own are mingled: so, her remains lost, Lucile's mother and mine reposes, among the preferred of Jesus Christ. God will have recognized my sister; and she, who thought little of this world, was bound to leave no trace behind. She has left me, that saintly genius. I have not spent a day without weeping for her. Lucile loved to hide; I have made, for her, a solitary place in my heart: she will leave it only when I have ceased to live.

These are the true, the only events of my real life! At the moment when I lost my sister, what did the thousands of soldiers falling on the field of battle mean to me, the crumbling of thrones, or the altering face of the world?

Lucile's death struck at the roots of my soul: my childhood at the heart of my family, the first vestiges of my existence, it was they that were vanishing. Our lives resemble those fragile buildings, shored up in the air by those flying-buttresses that do not crumble all at once, but collapse in succession; they continue to support some gallery when they have already failed the sanctuary or the cradle of the edifice. Madame de Chateaubriand, still wounded by Lucile's imperious whims, saw only deliverance for the Christian woman, finding peace with her Lord. Let us be gentle, if we would be regretted: great genius and superior qualities are mourned only by the angels. But I was unable to share Madame de Chateaubriand's consolation.

## END OF BOOK XVII

## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 1

The years 1805 and 1806 – I return to Paris – I leave for the Levant

Paris, 1839 (Revised December 1846)

When, in returning to Paris by the Burgundy road, I caught sight of the cupola of Val-de-Grâce and the dome of Sainte-Geneviève, which overlooks the Jardin-des-Plantes, my heart was troubled: yet again a life's companion left behind on the journey! We went back to the Hôtel de Coislin, and, though Monsieur de Fontanes, Monsieur Joubert, Monsieur de Clausel, and Monsieur Molé would have come to spend the evening with me, I was worked upon by so many thoughts and memories I could no longer meet them. Living alone, beyond the dear subjects who had parted from me, like a foreign sailor whose term has expired and who has neither home nor country, I kicked my heels on shore; I burned with a longing to swim in a new ocean to refresh myself and forge my way across. A scion of Pindar, bred in Jerusalem, I was impatient to merge my solitudes with the ruins of Athens, my sorrows with the Magdalen's tears.

I went to see my relatives in Brittany, and, on returning to Paris, I left for Trieste on the 13th of July 1806: Madame de Chateaubriand accompanied me as far as Venice, where Monsieur Ballanche came to meet her.

My life having been documented hour by hour in the Itinerary, I would have nothing more to say here, if I did not possess several unpublished letters written or received during and after my voyage. Julien, my servant and companion, has, for his part, written an Itinerary to accompany mine, as passengers on board ship keep a detailed journal during a voyage of discovery. The short manuscript which he placed at my disposal has served to confirm my narration: I will be Cook, he can be Clerke.

In order to fully reveal the manner in which one was struck by the ordering of society and the hierarchy of intellects, I will interweave my narrative with that of Julien. I will let him speak first, since he covers several days sailing without me from Modon to Smyrna.

#### JULIEN'S *ITINERARY*

*'We embarked on Friday the 1st of August; but, the wind not being favorable for leaving harbor, we moored until the following dawn. Then the port pilot came aboard to advise us that he could now allow us to leave. Since I had never been to sea, I was given an exaggerated idea of the risks, since I saw nothing of any such for two days. But on the third, a tempest blew up; lightning, thunder, finally a terrible storm assailed us and whipped up the waves with terrifying force. Our crew was made up of only eight sailors, the captain, an officer, a pilot, a cook, and five passengers, including Monsieur and myself, making seventeen men in all. We all set to, assisting the sailors to take in the sails, despite the rain which we were soon passing through, having discarded our coats to work more freely. The work occupied my mind, and made me forget the danger which, in truth, is more frightening in concept than it is in reality. For two days, the storms succeeded one another, which hardened me to my first days' navigation; I was not troubled in the least. Monsieur had feared lest I suffer from sea sickness; when calm was re-established he said to me: 'Now I am reassured about your health; since you have endured these two days of storms, you can rest easy regarding any other incidents.' Nothing more took place during the rest of our course to*

*Smyrna. On the 10th, which was a Sunday, Monsieur disembarked near to a Turkish village named Modon, where he landed in order to visit Greece. There were two men from Milan among the passengers with us, who were travelling to Smyrna to report on the tin-making and pewter operations. One of the two, who spoke the Turkish language quite well, was named Joseph, to whom Monsieur suggested that he might accompany him, as a private interpreter, and he mentions him in his Itinerary. Monsieur told us on leaving us that the voyage would only take a few days, and that he would rejoin the vessel at an island we were bound to pass in four or five days' time, and that he would wait for us at that island, if he arrived there before us. Since Monsieur thought that this man would be all the company he needed for his little trip (from Sparta to Athens), he left me on board to continue my journey to Smyrna and take care of all our possessions. He entrusted me with a letter of recommendation to the French Consul, in case he failed to rejoin us; and that is what happened. On the fourth day we arrived at the island indicated. The Captain went ashore and Monsieur was not there. We anchored for the night and waited until seven in the morning. The Captain returned on shore to give warning that he was obliged to leave, having a fair wind and obliged as he was to take account of the distance. Moreover, he could see a pirate vessel seeking to approach us, and he had an urgent need of preparing our immediate defence. He charged his four cannon, and displayed his shotguns, pistols and blades on the bridge; but, as we had the advantage of the wind, the pirate abandoned us. We arrived in the port of Smyrna, on Monday the 18th, at seven in the evening.'*

Having crossed Greece, touching at Zea and Chios, I found Julien at Smyrna. Today, in my memory, I see Greece as one of those bright circles that one sometimes perceives when closing one's eyes. On that mysterious phosphorescence are drawn the ruins of a fine and admirable architecture, the whole rendered still more resplendent by some further brightness of the Muses. When will I see the thyme of Hymettus once more, the oleanders on the banks of the Eurotas? One of the men I have most envied leaving behind on a foreign shore was the Turkish customs officer at Piraeus: he lived alone, the keeper of three deserted harbors, casting his eyes over the bluish islands, the gleaming promontories, and the golden waters. There, I only heard the noise of waves breaking against the obliterated tomb of Themistocles and the murmur of faraway memories: in the silence of Sparta's ruins, even fame was mute.

I abandoned, in the cradle of Melesigene, my poor dragoman (interpreter) Joseph, the Milanese, in his tinsmith's workshop, and headed for Constantinople. I went to Pergamum, wishing above all to reach Troy, out of poetic sympathy; a fall from my horse awaited me at the start of my journey; not because Pegasus flinched, but because I was asleep. I have recalled the incident in my *Itinerary*; Julien tells of it also, and he makes remarks, regarding the trails and the horses, to whose truth I can bear witness.

#### JULIEN'S *ITINERARY*

*'Monsieur, who fell asleep on horseback, fell off without waking. As soon as the horse had halted, so did mine which was following. I quickly set foot to ground to find out the cause, since it was impossible for me to find out from six feet away. I saw Monsieur half-awake beside his horse, and quite astonished to find himself on the ground; he assured me he had suffered no hurt. His horse had not tried to bolt, which would have been dangerous, since the place where we were was close to the cliff-edge.'*

Leaving Soma, having passed through Pergamum, I had an argument with my guide, recorded in the *Itinerary*. Here is Julien's version:

*'We left that village at a very early hour, after having recharged our canteen. A short distance from the village, I was extremely surprised to see Monsieur furious with our guide; I asked the reason. Then, Monsieur told me that he had agreed with the guide, at Smyrna, that he would lead him to the plains of Troy, on the way, but that, at this moment, he refused saying that the plains were infested with brigands. Monsieur believed not a word of it and would listen to no one. As I could see he was getting more and more excited, I signaled to the guide to come closer to the interpreter and the janissary (guard), to explain to me what he been told of the dangers which might be present in the plains which Monsieur wished to visit. The guide told the interpreter that he had been assured that it was necessary to travel in great numbers to avoid attack: the janissary told me the same thing. So I went to Monsieur and told him what all three had said, and, further, that we would find a little village within a day's travel where they had a sort of Consul who could inform us of the true position. After this conversation, Monsieur calmed down and we continued our journey towards that place. As soon as we arrived, he went to the Consul, who told him of all the risks he ran, if he persisted in his intention to travel with such a small group into the plains of Troy. Then Monsieur was obliged to forgo his project, and we continued our journey to Constantinople.'*

I arrived at Constantinople.

#### MY ITINERARY

*'The almost complete absence of women, the lack of wheeled vehicles and the packs of master-less dogs were the three distinctive characteristics that first struck me in the interior of that extraordinary city. Since nearly everybody walks about in oriental slippers, since there is no sound of carts or carriages, since there are no bells, and almost no trades requiring a hammer, the silence is continuous. You see a mute crowd around you who seem to wish to pass by without being perceived, and who always have the air of hiding from their masters. You arrive continually at a bazaar or a cemetery, as if the Turks were only there to buy, sell or die. The cemeteries, lacking walls and set in the midst of the streets, contain groves of magnificent cypress trees: the doves make their nests in these cypresses and share the peace of the dead. Here and there one finds ancient monuments which bear no relationship to modern man or later monuments, with which they are surrounded: one might imagine they were transported to this oriental city for talismanic effect. No signs of joy, no indications of happiness reveal themselves to your eyes; what one sees are not a people, but a crowd led by an imam and whose throats a janissary slits. Among prisons and penal colonies, rises a seraglio, Capitol of slavery: there a sacred guardian carefully conserves the germs of plague and the primitive laws of tyranny.'*

Julien, for his part, does not lose himself thus among the clouds:

#### JULIEN'S ITINERARY

*'The interior of Constantinople is very unpleasant on account of its sloping towards the canal and the port; one is obliged to beat a retreat time after time from all the streets which descend in that direction (very badly paved streets) in order to keep to the land that the water surrounds. There are few vehicles: the Turks make much more use of saddle-horses than other nations. In the French quarter there are several chairs with porters for the ladies. There are also horses and camels for hire for transporting*

*merchandise. One also sees porters, Turks with very thick long sticks; they can fasten five or six items to each end and carry enormous loads at a steady pace; a single man can also carry very heavy burdens. They have a sort of hook, which is fitted to them from the shoulders to the small of the back, and with remarkable skill in balancing they carry all the parcels without them being secured.'*

## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 2

From Constantinople to Jerusalem – I embark at Constantinople on a ship carrying  
Greek pilgrims to Syria

#### MY ITINERARY

*‘There were almost two hundred passengers on board, men, women, children and old people. One saw as many mats ranged in ranks on both sides of the tween deck. In that republic of sorts each managed their household as they liked: women nursed their children, men smoked or prepared their dinner, elders talked together. The sound of mandolins, violins and lyres was heard on all sides. They sang, danced, laughed, and prayed. Everyone was joyful. Pointing south, they cried: “Jerusalem!” and I replied: “Jerusalem!” In a word, without our fear, we would have been the happiest people in the world; but at the least wind, the sailors took in the sails, and the pilgrims shouted: Christos, Kyrie eleison! The storm past, we recovered our courage.’*

Here, I am outdone by Julien:

#### JULIEN’S ITINERARY

*‘We were obliged to attend to our departure for Jaffa, which took place on Thursday the 18th of September [1806]. We embarked on a Greek vessel, on which there were at least a hundred and fifty Greeks, as many men as women and children, who were going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which caused the ship many difficulties.*

*We had provisions and cooking utensils, like the other passengers, which I had bought in Constantinople. I had, besides, another complete pack of provisions that Monsieur l’Ambassadeur had given us, composed of good quality biscuits, ham, sausages and saveloys; wine of different sorts, rum, sugar, lemons, even including wine flavored with cinchona-bark for the fever. So I found myself provided with abundant resources, which I husbanded and did not consume, with great economy, knowing we had only this voyage to make; all was squeezed in where the passengers could not go.*

*Our journey, which has taken only thirteen days, has seemed long to me because of all kinds of disagreement and impropriety on board. During several days of bad weather which we have had, the women and children were sick, vomiting everywhere to the point that we were obliged to abandon our berth and sleep on the bridge. We ate there much more conveniently than elsewhere, having opted to wait until all the Greeks had finished their messing about.’*

I pass the Dardanelles straits; I touch at Rhodes, and engage a pilot for the coast of Syria. – We are delayed by the calm, below the continent of Asia, almost opposite ancient Cape Chelidonia. – We linger for two days at sea, without knowing where we are.

#### MY ITINERARY

*‘The weather was so beautiful, and the breeze so gentle, that all the passengers spent the night on deck. I disputed a small corner of the poop with two large Greek monks who yielded to me but not without muttering. I was asleep there on the 30th of September, at six in the morning, when I was woken by a babble of voices: I opened my eyes, and saw the pilgrims staring towards the prow of the vessel. I asked what was there; they shouted to me: Signor, il Carmelo! Mount Carmel! The wind had risen the previous evening at eight, and, during the night, we had arrived in sight of the Syrian coast. As I was lying there fully dressed, I was soon up, inquiring about the sacred mountain. They all surrounded me to point it out; but I could see nothing, because the sun was rising in our faces. The moment had something both religious and majestic about it; all the pilgrims, rosary in hand, were standing in silence in the same attitude, waiting for a sight of the Holy Land; the head of the elders prayed in a loud voice: one heard only this prayer and the sound of the vessel’s wake as the most favorable of winds drove it over the gleaming sea. From time to time, a cry rose from the prow as they caught sight of Carmel again. At last I saw the mountain for myself, like a round blob beneath the sun’s rays. I knelt then in the manner of us Latins. I did not feel the kind of agitation that I experienced on seeing the coast of Greece: but the sight of the cradle of the Israelites and the fatherland of Christians filled me with joy and respect. I was to set foot on a land of wonders, the source of the most astonishing poetry, in places where, speaking even in a purely human sense, the greatest event which ever changed the face of the world occurred.*

.....

*‘The wind dropped at midday; it rose again at four; but, through the pilot’s ignorance, we missed our objective...At two in the afternoon, we saw Jaffa again.’*

A boat left shore with three monks aboard. I descended with them into the launch; we entered harbor through a navigable opening in the rocks, dangerous even for a rowing boat.

*The Arabs on shore advanced into the water to their waists, in order to take us up on their shoulders. There passed a pleasant scene; my servant was dressed in a whitish dress-coat; white being the color of distinction among the Arabs, they decided that Julien was the sheik. They seized on him and carried him off in triumph, despite his protestations, while I, dressed in my blue coat, made off unnoticed on the back of a ragged beggar.’*

Now, let us hear, Julien, the principal actor of the scene:

#### JULIEN’S *ITINERARY*

*‘What was my astonishment on seeing half a dozen Arabs arriving to carry me to shore, while there were only two for Monsieur, it amusing him greatly to see me carried like a sacred object. I do not know if my clothing appeared more imposing than Monsieur’s to them; he had on a brown coat and buttons of the same color, while mine was whitish, with buttons of pale metal which reflected the light of the sun; it is no doubt that which may have occasioned their error.*

*We entered the monastery of the monks of Jaffa, on Wednesday the 1st of October, they being of the Order of the Cordeliers, speaking Latin and Italian, but very little French. They made us very welcome and did everything possible to procure whatever we needed.’*



I arrive at Jerusalem. – On the advice of the Fathers of the monastery, I cross the Holy City rapidly in order to reach the Jordan. – After halting at the monastery in Bethlehem, I leave with an escort of Arabs; I stop at Saint-Saba. – At midnight, I found myself on the shore of the Dead Sea.

#### MY ITINERARY

*‘When one travels in Judea, a great tedium first seizes the mind; but when, in passing from solitude to solitude, the space extends itself before you, the ennui gradually dissipates, and one experiences a secret terror which, far from depressing the soul, gives one courage and raises one’s spirits. Extraordinary sights reveal on all sides a land worked on by miracles: the burning sun, the impetuous eagle, the sterile fig-tree, all the poetry, all the Scriptural tableaux are there. Every name conceals a mystery; every cave foretells the future; every summit retains the tones of some prophet. God Himself has spoken on these shores: the dried-up torrents, the shattered rocks, the half-open tombs, attest to marvels; the desert seems mute with terror still, and one would say it had not dared to break the silence since it heard the Eternal voice.’*

We had descended the rump of the mountain, in order to spend the night on the shore of the Dead Sea, from there to return to the Jordan.

#### JULIEN’S ITINERARY

*‘We dismounted from our horses to let them rest and eat, like us, who had a fine set of provisions that the monks of Jerusalem had given us. After our meal was finished, our Arabs went some way from us, to listen, ear to the ground, for any sound; being assured that we could rest easy, everyone then abandoned themselves to sleep. Though lying on stones, I had enjoyed a very good sleep, when Monsieur came to rouse me, at five in the morning, to get all our people ready for departure. He had already filled a canister, holding about three wine-bottles, with water from the Dead Sea, to take back to Paris.’*

#### MY ITINERARY

*‘We raised camp, and travelled for an hour and a half with exceeding difficulty, through fine white sand. We advanced towards a little grove of trees, balm and tamarind, which to my great astonishment, I saw rising from the midst of sterile ground. Suddenly, the Bethlehemites stopped and pointed out, in the depths of a ravine, something which I had not noticed. Without being able to say what it was, I half saw what seemed like a kind of sand-flow over the motionless earth. I approached this singular object, and saw a yellow stream that I could scarcely distinguish from the sand of its two banks. It was deeply incised, and ran thickly with a sluggish flow: it was the Jordan...*

*The Bethlehemites stripped off and plunged into the Jordan. I dared not imitate them, because of the fever which continually troubled me.’*

#### JULIEN’S ITINERARY

*‘We arrived at the Jordan at seven in the morning, through sands where our horses sank in up to their knees, and through gullies which they had difficulty climbing out of. We followed the river until ten, and to cool us we were bathed conveniently in the shade of the low trees which bordered the river. It would have been very easy to cross to the other side by swimming, since its width, where we were situated, was only about 80 yards; but it would not have been safe to do so, since there were Arabs trying to catch up with us, and in a short while they assembled in large numbers. Monsieur filled his second canister with Jordan water.’*

We returned to Jerusalem: Julien was not much taken with the Holy Places; like a true philosopher, he is terse: ‘Calvary,’ he says, ‘is in the same church, on a height, similar to many other heights we have climbed, and from which you can see nothing in the distance but uncultivated land, and nothing as to trees but shrubs and undergrowth gnawed by animals. The Valley of Josaphat is found outside the walls of Jerusalem, at its foot, and resembles a moat to a rampart.’

I left Jerusalem; I arrived at Jaffa, and embarked for Alexandria. From Alexandria I went to Cairo, leaving Julien behind with Monsieur Drovetti, who had the kindness to charter an Austrian vessel to Tunis for me. Julien continues his journal in Alexandria: ‘*There are,*’ he says, ‘*Jews who speculate illegally as they do wherever they are. At half a league from the town, there is Pompey’s Pillar, which is of reddish granite, mounted on a sizeable bank of stones.*’

#### MY ITINERARY

*‘On the 23rd of November at midday, the wind turning favorable, I returned on board the vessel. I embraced Monsieur Drovetti on the shore, and we exchanged promises of remembrance and friendship; today I acquit my debt.*

*We raised anchor at two. A pilot took us out of port. The wind was blowing weakly from the south. We stayed in sight of Pompey’s Pillar which we could make out on the horizon for three days. On the evening of the third day, we heard the sound of the night canon from the harbor at Alexandria. It was like a signal for our final departure, since a northerly wind rose, and we made sail to the west.*

*On the 1st of December, the wind, steady from the west, barred our course. Gradually it swung to the south-west and changed to a storm, which did not cease until we arrived at Tunis. To occupy the time, I copied and set in order the notes of this voyage and the descriptive passages of Les Martyrs. At night, I walked on the bridge with the second in command, Captain Dinelli. Nights spent among the waves, on a ship battered by a storm, are not wasted; uncertainty regarding our future gives objects their true worth: the earth, contemplated from the midst of a stormy sea, resembles life considered by a man who is about to die.’*

#### JULIEN’S ITINERARY

*‘After our exit from the harbor at Alexandria, we did quite well for the first few days, but it did not last, since we had continual bad weather and foul winds for the rest of the voyage. There was an officer on watch on the bridge constantly, with the pilot and four of the crew. When we could see, at the end of the day, that we were about to have a bad night, we would ascend to the bridge. Around midnight, I made our*

*punch. I would start by handing some to our pilot and the four sailors then I would serve Monsieur, the officer and myself; but we did not drink it as calmly as we would have done in a café. The officer was much more accustomed to it than the captain; he spoke French very well, which made it very pleasant for us during our voyage.'*

We continue our journey and anchor at the Kerkeni Islands.

#### MY ITINERARY

*'A storm rose from the south-west to our great joy, and in five days we arrived in the waters around Malta. We caught sight of it on Christmas Eve; but on Christmas Day itself, the wind, veering to west-north-west, drove us south of Lampedusa. We lingered for eighteen days on the east coast of the kingdom of Tunis, between life and death. I will never forget the 28th.*

*We dropped anchor at the Kerkeni Islands. We stayed eight days at anchor in the Syrtis Minor, where I began the year 1807. Beneath how many stars and with what varying fortune I have seen the years renew, years which pass so quickly or seem so long! How far from me are those childhood days when with joyful heart I received my parents' blessings and presents! How eagerly New Year's Day was awaited! And now, on a foreign vessel, in the midst of the sea, in sight of a barbarous land, that first day vanished for me, without witness, without pleasure, without family embraces, without the tender good wishes that a mother bestows on her son with such sincerity! That day, born from the womb of tempests, only deposited on my brow anxieties, regrets and white hairs.'*

Julien is exposed to the same fate, and he reprimands me for one of those fits of impatience of which happily I am cured.

#### JULIEN'S ITINERARY

*'We were close to the Isle of Malta and were fearful of being seen by some English vessel which might have forced us to enter that port; but nothing came out to meet us. Our crew were exhausted and the wind continued unfavorable. The captain seeing an anchorage named Kerkeni on his chart, which we were not far off, made sail, without warning Monsieur, who, seeing us approaching an anchorage, was angry at not having been consulted, telling the captain he must continue on course, having endured worse weather. But we were too close to resume our route, and moreover the captain's prudence was much approved of, since the night before, the wind had become stronger and the sea very rough. Having been obliged to wait there at anchor twenty four hours longer than anticipated, Monsieur showed his lively dissatisfaction with the captain, despite the logical reasons he was given.*

*We had been sailing for almost a month, and we only needed seven or eight hours to reach the port of Tunis. Suddenly, the wind became so violent that we were obliged to veer off, and we waited for three weeks without being able to reach the harbor. It was then that Monsieur reproached the captain once more for having lost thirty-six hours at anchor. No one could persuade him that we would have been in deep trouble, if the captain had shown less foresight. The misfortune I could foresee was that of our dwindling provisions, without knowing when we might arrive.'*

I have trod the soil of Carthage at last. I have found the most generous hospitality with Monsieur and Madame Devoise. Julien gets to know my host well; he talks about the country too and the Jews: '*They pray and weep*', he says.

An American brig of war having granted me passage on board, I crossed the Lake of Tunis to reach La Goulette. '*Once underway*,' says Julien, '*I asked Monsieur if he had brought the gold he had placed in a desk in the room where he slept; he told me had forgotten it, and I was obliged to return to Tunis.*' Money never lodges itself in my brain.

When I arrived at Alexandria, we anchored opposite the ruins of Hannibal's city. I stared at them from the ship's side without being able to make out what they were. I saw several Moorish dwellings, a Muslim hermitage on the headland, ewes grazing among the ruins, ruins so little evident that I could scarcely distinguish them from the soil they stood on: it was Carthage. I visited it before embarking for Europe.

#### MY ITINERARY

*'From the summit of Byrsa, the eye embraces the ruins of Carthage which are more numerous than is generally thought: they resemble those of Sparta, nothing worthwhile having been preserved, but occupying a considerable space. I saw them in the month of February; the fig-trees, olives, and carob-trees already showed their first leaves; large angelicas and acanthuses formed tufts of verdure among the multi-colored marble ruins. In the distance I glanced over an isthmus, twin seas, far-off islands, a glowing countryside, bluish lakes, and azure mountains; I made out forests, vessels, aqueducts, Moorish villages, Muslim hermitages, minarets and the white houses of Tunis. Thousands of starlings, flocking in battalions and looking like dark clouds, flew above my head. Surrounded by the greatest and most moving of relics, I thought of Dido, of Sophonisbe, of Hasdrubal's noble wife; I contemplated the vast plains where the legions of Hannibal, Scipio and Caesar are buried; my eyes wished to dwell on the site of Utica. Alas! The ruins of Tiberius's palace on Capri are still in existence, but one searches in vain at Utica for Cato's house! Finally the terrifying Vandals and the careless Moors passed in turn through my memory, which offered me, as a last tableau, Saint Louis expiring among the ruins of Carthage.'*

Julien ends like me by catching his last sight of Africa at Carthage.

#### JULIEN'S ITINERARY

*'On the 7th and 8th we wandered among the ruins of Carthage where there are still some foundations on open ground, which prove the durability of ancient monuments. There are also the outlines of baths submerged beneath the soil. There are still three fine cisterns; others are visible which have been buried. The few inhabitants who occupy these regions cultivate the fields necessary to them. They uncover various marbles and stones, just as they do medals which they sell to travellers as antiques: Monsieur bought some to take back to France.'*

## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 3

From Tunis to my return to France via Spain

Julien tells briefly of our voyage from Tunis to the Bay of Gibraltar; from Algeciras, he quickly reaches Cadiz, and, from Cadiz, Granada. Indifferent to Blanca, he merely remarks that the Alhambra and other buildings rise from the rocks to an immense height. My *Itinerary* does not enter into much more detail regarding Granada; I content myself with saying:

*'The Alhambra seems to me worthy of note, even after the ruins of Greece. The valley of Granada is delightful and much resembles that of Sparta: one can understand that the Moors regret their second country.'*

In *Le Dernier des Abencérage*, I describe the Alhambra. The Alhambra, the Generalife, and Sacromonte are etched on my mind like those imaginary countries that one half-sees, often at break of day in the beautiful first light of dawn. I still feel Nature deeply enough to describe the Vega; but I would not dare attempt it, for fear of the Archbishop of Granada. During my stay in the city of sultanas, a guitarist, driven by an earthquake from a village which I happened to travel through, attached himself to me. Deaf as a post, he followed me everywhere: when I sat among the ruins in the Palace of the Moors, he stood by my side and sang, accompanying himself on his guitar. The harmonious indigent might not have composed a Creation oratorio, perhaps, but his sunburnt chest showed through the tatters of his jersey, and he had great need of writing as Beethoven did to Mademoiselle Breuning: *'Venerable Eleonore, my very dear friend, I would dearly wish to be fortunate enough to possess a jacket of angora rabbits' wool knitted by you.'*

From one coast to the other, I traversed that Spain where, sixteen years later, heaven reserved a great role for me, in helping to stifle anarchy amongst a noble people, and liberating a Bourbon: the honor of our arms was re-established, and I would have saved the Legitimacy, if the Legitimacy could have understood the conditions for its survival.

Julien does not let go of me until he has brought me back to the Place Louis XV, on the 5th of June 1807, at three in the afternoon. From Granada, he had conducted me to Aranjuez, to Madrid, to the Escorial, from which he leaps to Bayonne.

*'We left Bayonne,' he says, 'on Tuesday the 9th of May for Pau, Tarbes, Barèges and Bordeaux, which we reached on the 18th, very weary, each with a bout of fever. We left on the 19th, and travelled to Angoulême and Tours, arriving at Blois on the 28th, where we slept. On the 31st, we continued our route to Orléans, and then made our last overnight stop at Angerville.'*

I was there, five miles from a château whose inhabitants my long voyage had not caused me to forget. But the gardens of Armida, where are they? Twice or thrice, returning to the Pyrenees, I have seen the column at Méréville from the highway; like Pompey's Pillar it told me of the wilderness: like my fortunes at sea, everything has altered.

I arrived in Paris before the news I had sent about myself: I had overtaken my existence. As insignificant as those letters are, I glance through them as one looks at poor sketches of places one has visited.

These letters are dated from Modon, Athens, Zea, Smyrna, and Constantinople; from Jaffa, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Tunis, Granada, Madrid, and Burgos; these lines traced on all sorts of paper, in all sorts of ink, brought by all the winds, interest me. I not only delight in unrolling my firmans (passports etc.): I touch their vellum with pleasure; I am revealed in elegant calligraphy and am dumbfounded by the pomp of their style. I was a very great person, then! We are such miserable devils, with our letters for three sous and our passports for forty, next to those lords of the turban!

Osman Said, Pasha of the Morea, thus addresses ‘whomever it may concern’ on my firman for Athens:

*‘Rulers of the towns of Mistra (Sparta) and Argos, cadis, nabobs, effendis, whose wisdom grow greater yet; honored by your peers, and our greatness, vaivodes, and you by whom your master sees, who represent him in each of your jurisdictions, men of stature and business, whose credit cannot but grow;*

*We advise you that one of the noblemen of France, a nobleman (in particular) from Paris, furnished with this order, accompanied by an armed janissary and a servant as escort, has requested permission and explained his intention of travelling through various places and sites which are under your jurisdiction, in order to reach Athens, which is beyond the Isthmus, outside your jurisdiction.*

*You effendis, vaivodes, and all others specified above, therefore, are to take great care when the above mentioned person arrives within your jurisdiction, that he is shown respect and all the measures which friendship makes lawful, etc., etc.*

*Year 1221 of the Hegira.’*

My passport issued in Constantinople for Jerusalem, reads:

*‘To the sublime tribunal of His Highness the Kadi of Kouds (Jerusalem), most excellent Sherif, effendi:*

*Accept, most excellent effendi, whom Your Highness has appointed to his august tribunal, our sincere blessings and affectionate greetings.*

*We advise you that a noble person, of the French Court, named François-Auguste de Chateaubriand, is travelling presently towards you, to accomplish the holy pilgrimage (of Christians).’*

Do we protect foreign travellers in this way, in regard to the mayors and gendarmes who inspect his passport? Equally one can read in these firmans the transformation of nations: what freedom must God have given to empires, for a Tartar slave to impose his orders on a vaivode of Mistra, that is to say a magistrate of Sparta: for a Muslim to recommend a Christian to the Cadi of Kouds, that is to say of Jerusalem!

The *Itinerary* is one of the elements which make up my life. When I left in 1806, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem seemed a great enterprise. Now that a crowd has followed me, and the whole world is on board,

the wonder has vanished; Tunis alone barely remains my own: less people head for that coast and it is acknowledged that I have identified the true location of the harbors of Carthage. This fine letter proves it:

*‘Monsieur le Vicomte, I have just received a plan of the site and ruins of Carthage, giving the exact contours and the relief map; it was measured trigonometrically from a 1500 meter base, and is supported by barometric observations made with matched barometers. It has been a work requiring ten years patience and precision: it confirms your opinion on the harbors of Byrsa.*

*With this exact plan, I have gone over all the ancient texts again, and I have determined, I think, the exterior enclosure and the other areas of Cothon, Byrsa and Megara, etc., etc. I now render you the justice due you in so many respects.*

*If you are not afraid of me swooping down upon your genius with my trigonometry and my weighty erudition, I will appear at your house at the first indication on your part. If my father and I follow you, in literature, longissimo intervallo (at a very great distance), at least we will try to imitate you in the noble independence of which you have given France such a fine model.*

*I have the honor to be, and boast of being, your honest admirer,*

DUREAU DE LA MALLE.’

A corresponding identification of the sites would have sufficed in former days to make my name as a geographer. Henceforth, If I still had a mania for speaking about myself, I know not where I might not have run off to, in order to catch the public’s attention: perhaps I might have taken up my old project once more of discovering the North-West passage; perhaps I might have ascended the Ganges. There, I would have seen the long dark straight line of trees that defends the Himalayas; if, after reaching the col that connects the two principal summits near the Gangotri glacier, I were to discover the immeasurable amphitheater of eternal snow, if I were to ask my guides, as Heber, the Anglican Bishop of Calcutta did, the name of the other mountains to the East, they would reply that they border the Empire of China. Well and good! But to return to the Pyramids, now, is as if one were merely returning to Montlhéry. *A propos* of that I recall that a pious antiquary of the neighborhood of Saint-Denis in France wrote to me to ask if Pontoise did not resemble Jerusalem.

The page which terminates my *Itinerary* seems to have been written at that very moment, it so reflects my true feelings.

*‘It was twenty years ago,’ I wrote, ‘that I dedicated myself to study among all the dangers and sorrows; diversa exilia et desertas quaerere terras: searching out differing exiles in different deserts: a large number of leaves from my books have been traced in my tent, in the desert, among the waves; I have often grasped my pen without knowing how many moments longer my existence might be prolonged...If Heaven grants me a peace I have never enjoyed, I will attempt in silence to raise a monument to my country; if Providence refuses me that peace, I can only think to spend my last days sheltering from the cares that poisoned my first. I am no longer young, I no longer love noise; I know that literature whose business is so sweet when it is secret, only draws us into the storm, outside. In any case, I have written enough if my name should live on; far too much if it should die.’*

It is possible that my *Itinerary* will last as a manual for the use of my kind of Wandering Jew: I have marked out the stages scrupulously and sketched a road map. Every voyager to Jerusalem writes to me to congratulate me and thank me for my exactitude; I will cite an example:

*‘Monsieur, you did me the honor, some weeks ago, to receive me at your house, with my friend Monsieur de Saint-Laumer: in bringing you a letter from Abou-Gosch, we happened to mention how many new merits one finds in your Itinerary when reading it in the locations themselves, and how one appreciates even in its very title, such a humble and modest choice of yours, when seeing it justified at every step by the scrupulous accuracy of its descriptions, still true today, except for a few ruins more or less, the only change in those countries, etc.*

JULES FOLENTLOT

*Rue Caumartin, no 23.*

My accuracy is due to my plain common sense; I am of the race of Celts and tortoises, a pedestrian race; not of the blood of Tartars and birds, races equipped with horses and wings. Religion, it is true, sometimes ravished me in its embrace; but when it returned me to earth, I walked on, leaning on my stick, resting by a milestone to eat my olives and brown bread. *If I often rode in the wood, as many a François gladly did*, I have never, despite that, loved change for change’s sake; travel bores me; I only love a voyage because of the freedom it grants me, as I incline towards the countryside, not for the countryside, but for the solitude. ‘*All the heavens are one to me,*’ says Montaigne, ‘*to live among our own people, to go and murmur and die among strangers.*’

I have some other letters from those Eastern lands, which reached their address several months after they were dated. Fathers of the Holy Land, Consuls and families, supposing me to have some power under the Restoration, claimed from me the rights of hospitality: from afar, one is deluded, and believes it to be meaningful. Monsieur Gaspari wrote to me, in 1816, to ask for my help in faveur of his son; his letter is addressed: *To Monsieur le Vicomte de Chateaubriand, Grand-Master of the Royal University, at Paris.*

Monsieur Caffé, not losing sight of what was happening around him, telling me news of his world, sends word from Alexandria: ‘*Since your departure, the country has not improved, though peace reigns. Though your Leader has nothing to fear from the Mamelukes, still refugees in Upper Egypt, he must yet be on his guard. The Abd-el-Ouad are still up to their tricks in Mecca. The Manouf canal is to be finished; Mehemet-Ali will be remembered in Egypt for having executed that project, etc.*’

On the 13th of August 1816, Monsieur Pangalo, the son, wrote to me from Zea:

*‘Monseigneur,*

*Your Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem has reached Zea, and I have read, in the midst of my family, what Your Excellency obligingly chose to say of it. Your stay among us was so short that we do not really merit the praise Your Excellency has bestowed on our hospitality, and the overly familiar manner with which we received you. We have also realized, with the greatest satisfaction, that Your Excellency, has been re-*



*appointed due to the latest events, and that you occupy a rank due to your merit as much as your birth. We congratulate you on it, and we hope that, at the pinnacle of greatness, Monsieur le Comte de Chateaubriand will gladly choose to remember Zea, and the numerous family of old Pangalo his host: that family in whom the French consulate has resided since the glorious reign of Louis-le-Grand, who signed our ancestors' patent. That old man, so enduring, is no more; I have lost my father; I find myself, in mediocre circumstances, charged with supporting the whole family; I have my mother, six sisters to marry off and several widows and their children in my charge. I have recourse to Your Excellency's goodness; I beg you to come to the aid of my family, in ensuring that the Vice-Consulate of Zea, which is extremely necessary for harboring the King's boats, has a salary like the other Vice-Consulates; being agent, as I am, I might be Vice-Consul, with the salary attached to that rank. I believe Your Excellency would find it easy to obtain this request because of my ancestors' long service, if he would deign to pursue it, and that he will excuse the importunate familiarity of his Zea hosts, who rely on your generosity.*

*'I am with the most profound respect,  
Monseigneur,  
Your Excellency's  
Very humble and very obedient servant,*

*Monsieur –G Pangalo.  
Zea, the 3rd of August 1816.'*

Every time a little laughter rises to my lips, I am punished for it as if it were a fault. This letter made me feel remorse when re-reading a passage (softened, it is true, by expressions of gratitude) regarding the hospitality of our Consuls in the Levant: '*Mesdemoiselles Pangalo*,' I wrote in the *Itinerary*, '*sang in Greek*:

*Ah! Vous dirai-je, maman?*

*Monsieur Pangalo, gave little cries, the cockerels crowed, and the memories of Ioulis, Aristaeus, Simonides were completely erased.'*

The requests for assistance almost always arrived in the midst of my discredit and woe. Even at the very beginning of the Restoration, on the 11th of October 1814, I received this quite different letter dated from Paris:

*'Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,  
Mademoiselle Dupont, of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, who had the honor of meeting you in those islands, is desirous of obtaining a brief audience with Your Excellency. Since she knows you live in the country, she begs you to let her know a day when you will be coming to Paris, on which you might grant her that audience.*

*I have the honor to be, etc.  
DUPONT'*

I had forgotten that young lady, from the epoch when I voyaged over the ocean, so ungrateful is memory! Yet, I had retained a perfect remembrance of the unknown girl who sat by me in those sad frozen Cyclades:

*‘A young fisher-girl appeared on the upper slopes of the hill; she had bare legs, despite the cold, and was walking through the dew; etc.’*

Circumstances, independent of my will, prevented me from seeing Mademoiselle Dupont. If, by chance, she was Guillaumy’s fiancée, what had been the effect on her of a quarter of a century? Had she suffered from the winters of the New World, or preserved the springtime of those bean-flowers, that sheltered in the moat of Saint-Pierre’s fort?

In the introduction to an excellent translation of the Letters of Saint Jerome, Messieurs Collombet and Grégoire are pleased to discover in their summary, a resemblance between that saint and myself, apropos of Judea, which with respect I reject. Saint Jerome, in the depths of his retreat, painted a picture of his inward struggles; I would not have found the expression of genius of the inhabitant of that cave in Bethlehem; at the very most, I might have been able to sing with Saint Francis, my patron saint in France and my host at the Holy Sepulchre, his two hymns in Italian of the epoch preceding Dante’s Italian:

*‘In foco l’amor mi mise,  
In foco l’amor mi mise  
(Love sets me in the flames)’*

I like to receive letters from overseas; these letters seem to bring me a murmur of their breezes, a ray of their suns, some emanation of the diverse destinies that waves part, and the memories of hospitality bind. Would I revisit those distant countries? One or two, maybe. The skies of Africa produced an enchantment in me which has not vanished; my imagination is still perfumed with the myrtles of the temple of Aphrodite of the Gardens and with the irises of the Cephisus.

Fénelon, on leaving for Greece, wrote the letter to Bossuet you are about to read. The future author of Télémaque reveals himself there with the ardor of a missionary and a poet.

*‘Various little incidents kept delaying my return to Paris until now; but at last, Monseigneur, I am leaving, and very nearly airborne. At the prospect of this journey, I meditate on a greater. The whole of Greece is open to me, the wary Sultan retreats; already the Peloponnese breaths in freedom, the Church of Corinth is about to flower again; the voice of the Apostle makes itself heard there still. I feel myself transported to those lovely places among those precious ruins, to sample there, along with the most curious monuments, the very spirit of antiquity. I seek that Areopagus, on which Saint Paul announced the unknown God to the world’s sages; but the profane follows the sacred, and I do not disdain to descend to Piraeus, where Socrates planned out his Republic. I climb to the summit of Parnassus, I gather the laurels of Delphi and I taste the delights of Tempe.*

*When will the blood of Turks mingle with that of the Persians on the plains of Marathon, and leave all of Greece to religion, philosophy and the fine arts, which regard it as their country?*

...Arva beata

Petamus arva, divites et insulas.

(let us seek out the fields,  
the golden fields, the islands of the blest)

*I will not forget you, O island consecrated by celestial visions to the Beloved Disciple, O happy Patmos, I will go and kiss the footsteps of the Apostle on your soil, and I believe I will see the heavens open. There, I will feel myself filled with indignation against the false prophet, who wished to expand the oracles of truth, and I will bless the All-Powerful, who far from throwing down the Church like Babylon, bound the dragon and rendered the Church victorious. I already see the schism ending, East and West reuniting, and Asia seeing the dawn anew after so long a night; earth sanctified by the Savior's footsteps and watered with his blood, delivered from those who profane it, and clothed in a fresh glory; and the children of Abraham, scattered through all the earth, and more numerous than the stars of the firmament, who, assembling, at last, from its four corners, will come, en masse, to recognize the Christ they crucified, and reveal a resurrection at the end of time. Enough, Monseigneur, you will be pleased to know that this is my final letter, and an end to my enthusiasm, which bothers you perhaps. Forgive such, in my desire to speak to you from afar, impatient until I might do so from nearer to you.*

*FR. de FÉNELON.'*

Here is the true modern Homer, alone worthy of singing Greece and recounting its beauty to a new Chrysostom.

## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 4

#### Reflection on my Travels – The Death of Julien

The sites of Syria, Egypt and the Punic lands were merely places which suited my solitary nature; they pleased me regardless of their antiquity, art and history. I was struck less by the grandeur of the Pyramids than by the desert above which they loomed; Diocletian's Column held my gaze less than the fringes of sea along the sands of Libya. At the sea-mouth of the Nile, I should have needed no monument to recall this scene depicted by Plutarch:

*'The ex-slave searched up and down the beach until he found the decayed remains of a small fishing boat, sufficient to make a pyre for a poor naked corpse. As he was gathering and assembling it, an old man appeared, a Roman who had served as a youth under Pompey in the wars. "Ah," said the Roman, "you shall not have this honor all to yourself, I beg you, let me be your companion in so saintly and pious a task, since I shall have no cause for regret after all, owning this recompense for all the hardship I have endured, knowing at least this good fortune, to be able to touch with my hands and help in the burial of the greatest general Rome has known.'*"

Caesar's rival no longer has a tomb in Libya, but a young slave, a *Libyan girl*, has received, from the hand of a female Pompey, a grave not far distant from that Rome from which the great Pompey was banished. In the face of these vagaries of fate, one understands why the Christians went and hid themselves in the Thebaid.

*'Born in Libya, buried in the flower of my youth beneath the Italian dust, I lie near Rome by this sandy shore. The illustrious Pompeia who raised me with a mother's tenderness, mourned my death and placed me in a tomb that rivals, I a poor slave, those of free Romans. The torches of my funeral have forestalled those of marriage. Proserpine's flame has quenched my hopes.'* (Palatine Anthology)

The winds have scattered those individuals of Europe, Asia, and Africa, amongst whom I appeared and of whom I have spoken: one wind blew from the Acropolis of Athens, another from the shores of Chios; this one poured from Mount Sion; that one will no longer escape the waves of the Nile or the wells of Carthage. The places have also altered; towns rise, just as in America, where I saw forests, an empire likewise is being created among the sands of Egypt, where my eyes met only *horizons naked and round as the boss of a shield*, as Arabic poetry says, *and jackals so thin that their jaws are like a split stick*. Greece has regained that freedom that I desired for her when I traversed her beneath the janissary's gaze. But does she enjoy a national liberty or has she only changed her yoke of servitude?

I am in some ways the last visitor to the Turkish Empire in its previous form. The revolutions, which have immediately preceded or followed my steps, everywhere, have extended to Greece, Syria and Egypt. Is a new Orient about to be created? What will emerge? Will we receive due punishment for having taught the art of modern warfare to nations whose social structure is founded on slavery and polygamy? Have we exported civilization to the outside world or have we imported barbarity to the heart of Christendom? What will result from these new interests, from these new political relationships, from the creation of powers which may suddenly surge through the Levant? No one can say. I do not allow myself to be

dazzled by steamships, and railroads; by the sale of manufactured products or the wealth of French, English, German and Italian soldiers enlisted in the service of some Pasha or other: all that is not civilization. Perhaps we will again see, in the disciplined troops of future Ibrahims, the dangers which menaced Europe in the time of Charles Martel, and from which, much later, Polish sacrifice saved us. I pity the travellers who will follow me: the harem will not conceal its secrets from them: they will not see the old sun of the Orient, or the turban of Mohammed. The little Bedouin cried out to me in French when I was travelling in the mountains of Judea: '*Onward march!*' The order has been given, and the Orient is on the march.

What became of Julien, Ulysses' friend? He requested of me, in submitting his manuscript to me, that he might become the concierge of my house on the Rue d'Enfer: that situation was occupied by an old doorman and his family whom I could not dismiss. The will of heaven having made Julien self-willed and a drunkard, I supported him for a long time; finally, we were obliged to part. I gave him a small sum of money and allowed him a tiny pension from my privy purse, a light enough one, but always copiously filled with excellent mortgage receipts from my castles in Spain. I made Julien enter the Hospice for the Old according to his own wish: there he completed the last and greatest voyage. I will soon occupy his empty bed, as I once slept, in the Khan of Demir-Capi, on the mat from which they had just removed a plague-ridden Muslim. My calling is definitely to be found in some hospital or in the midst of the old society, which makes a semblance of being alive and is none the less involved in its own death-pangs. When it expires, it will decompose in order to reproduce itself in new forms, but it must first succumb; the primary necessity for nations, like men, is to die: '*By the breath of God the frost is given*', says Job.

## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 5

The Years 1807, 1808, 1809 and 1810 – An article in the *Mercury*, June 1807

– I buy the Vallée-Aux-Loups and retreat there

Paris, 1839 (Revised June 1847)

Madame de Chateaubriand had been very ill during my voyage; my friends several times thought me lost. In letters which Monsieur de Clausel wrote to his children and which he has kindly allowed me to read, I find this passage:

*‘Monsieur de Chateaubriand left on his voyage to Jerusalem in the month of July 1806: during his absence I went to Madame de Chateaubriand’s house every day. Our traveller did me the kindness to write to me a lengthy letter, from Constantinople, which you will find in the drawer in our library at Coussergues. During the winter of 1806 and 1807, we knew that Monsieur de Chateaubriand was at sea returning to Europe; one day, I was walking in the Tuileries Gardens with Monsieur de Fontanes in the teeth of a dreadful westerly wind; we were sheltering beneath the terrace by the water’s edge. Monsieur de Fontanes said to me: – Perhaps at this very moment, a gust from this terrible storm will cause his shipwreck. We have since learnt that this presentiment failed to be realized. I note this to express the lively friendship, the interest in Monsieur de Chateaubriand’s literary glory, which was bound to increase with that voyage; the noble, the profound and rare sentiments which animated Monsieur de Fontanes, that excellent man from whom I too have had great service, and whom I recommend you to remember before God.’*

If I had been certain to survive, and if I could have perpetuated in my works those people who are dear to me, with what pleasure I would have taken my friends along with me!

Full of hope, I carried my handful of gleanings back home; my peace and quiet was not of long duration.

After a series of agreements, I became sole proprietor of the *Mercure*.

Towards the end of June 1807, Monsieur Alexandre de Laborde published his travels in Spain; in July, I published the article in the *Mercury* from which I have quoted various passages in speaking of the Duc d’Enghien’s death: *When in the silence of abjection*, etc. Bonaparte’s successes, far from subduing me, had provoked me; I had gained fresh energy from my feelings and the tempests. My face had not been bronzed by the sun in vain, nor had I exposed myself to the wrath of the heavens in order to tremble sad-browed before a merely human anger. If Napoleon had done with kings, he had not done with me. My article, appearing in the midst of his successes and triumphs, stirred France: innumerable copies were made by hand; several subscribers to the *Mercure* cut out the article and had it bound separately; it was read in the salons and hawked from house to house. One has to have lived at that moment to gain any idea of the effect produced by a lone voice ringing out amongst the silence of the world. Noble feelings, buried in the depths of men’s hearts, revived. Napoleon was furious: one is less irritated by the criticism made than by its attack on one’s self-image. What! To scorn even his glory; for a second time, to brave the anger of one at whose feet the world had fallen, prostrate! *‘Does Chateaubriand think I am an imbecile:*

*that I don't comprehend him? I'll have him cut down on the steps of the Tuileries!*' He gave orders to suppress the *Mercure*, and for my arrest. My property was lost; my person escaped by a miracle: Bonaparte was pre-occupied by the wider world; he forgot me, but I remained weighed down by menace. My situation was deplorable: while I felt I had to act according to my sense of honor, I found myself burdened with personal responsibilities, and the anxieties I was causing my wife. Her courage was great, but she none the less suffered, and these storms falling in succession on my head troubled her life. She had suffered so much on my behalf during the Revolution! It was natural that she longed for a little peace. The more so in that Madame de Chateaubriand admired Bonaparte without reservation; she had no illusions about the Legitimacy; she was forever predicting what would happen to me if the Bourbons returned.

The first chapter of these *Memoirs* is dated the 4th of October 1811, at the Vallée-aux-Loups: there will be found my description of the little retreat which I purchased to hide myself in, at that time. Leaving our apartment at Madame de Coislin's, we went to live in the Rue des Saints-Pères, in the Hôtel de Lavalette, which took its name from the owners of the place.

Monsieur de Lavalette, stocky, dressed in a violet-colored morning-coat, and carrying a gold-knobbed cane, had become my business manager, if indeed I have ever had any business. He had been a cup-bearer in the Royal household, and what I did not eat, he drank.

Towards the end of November, seeing that the repairs to my cottage were making no progress, I decided to go and supervise them. We arrived at the Vallée in the evening. We did not take the usual road; we entered through the gate at the end of the garden. The soil in the drives, soaked with rain, prevented the horses from going on; the carriage overturned. The plaster bust of Homer, placed beside Madame de Chateaubriand, was thrown through the window, and shattered its neck: a bad omen for Les Martyrs on which I was then working.

The house, filled with laughing, singing, hammering workmen, was warmed by a fire of wood-shavings and lit by candle-ends: it resembled a hermitage in the woods illuminated at night by pilgrims. Delighted to find two rooms quite passable, in one of which a table had been laid, we sat down to dine. Next day, awakened by the noise of hammering, and the songs of the colonists, I watched the sun rise with less anxiety than that master of the Tuileries.

I was surrounded by endless enchantments; though no Madame de Sévigné, I went out, furnished with a pair of clogs, to plant trees in the mud, traverse the same walks over and over, look once and again into every little corner, conceal myself wherever there was a clump of bushes, imagining what my park would be like in the future, since then the future was uncompromised. Searching, today, to re-open that vista which has closed, I no longer find that same one indeed, though I meet with others. I lose myself among vanished memories; perhaps the illusions I come across are as lovely as those earlier ones; only they are not as youthful; what I saw in the splendor of noon, I perceive in the glow of evening. – If only I might cease to be plagued by dreams! Bayard, ordered to relinquish a position, replied: '*See, I have made a bridge of corpses, in order to cross over it to the garrison.*' I fear that in order to depart, I must pass over the bodies of my illusions.

My trees, being still quite small, were not filled with the sound of the autumn winds; but, in spring, the breezes that breathed the flowery fragrance of the neighboring fields held their breath, and released it over my valley.

I made a few additions to my cottage; I embellished its brick wall with a portico supported by two black marble columns and two white marble caryatids: I remembered I had been to Athens. My plan was to add a tower to the end of the building; in the meantime, I simulated battlements along the wall that bordered the road: thus I anticipated the obsession regarding the Middle Ages which currently stupefies us. Of all the possessions I have lost, the Vallée-aux-Loups is the only one I regret; it is written that nothing will remain to me. After my Valley was lost, I planted out the Marie-Thérèse Infirmary, and I have just left that too. I defy fate to attach me to the smallest plot of earth now; henceforth, I will only have as my garden those avenues, honored with such fine names, around the Invalides, where I walk with my lame and one-armed colleagues. Not far from these walks, Madame de Beaumont's cypress lifts its head; in these deserted spaces, the great, light-hearted Duchesse de Châtillon once leant on my arm. I only give my arm to time, now: who is heavy enough!

I worked at my *Memoirs* with pleasure, and *Les Martyrs* progressed; I had already read several chapters to Monsieur de Fontanes. I was established amongst my memories as in a vast library: I consulted here, and then there and finally closed the volume with a sigh, when I perceived that the light, by penetrating, destroyed the mystery. Shed light on the days of your life, and they will no longer be as they were.

In July 1808, I fell ill, and was obliged to return to Paris. The doctors rendered the illness dangerous. While Hippocrates was living, there was a lack of dead spirits in Hades, says the epigram: thanks to our modern Hippocrates, there is no shortage today.

That was perhaps the only time when, near to death, I longed for life. When I felt myself to be weaker, which often happened, I would say to Madame de Chateaubriand: '*Don't worry; I will recover.*' I would lose consciousness, but with a mounting impatience within, since I was holding on, God knows to what. Also I was possessed with desire to complete what I thought, and still think, to be my most perfect work. I was reaping the reward for the fatigue I had often experienced during my travels in the Levant.

Girodet had given the last touches to my portrait. He made it melancholy, as I then was; but he filled it with his genius. Monsieur Denon accepted the masterpiece for the Salon; as a noble courtier he placed it prudently out of the way. When Bonaparte arrived to review the gallery, he looked at the paintings and then asked: '*Where is the portrait of Chateaubriand?*' *He knew it must be there: they were obliged to lift the curtain on its hiding place. Bonaparte, exhaling a fulsome breath, said, on gazing at the portrait: 'He has the air of a conspirator who has come down the chimney.'*

On returning to the Vallée alone one day, Benjamin, the gardener, told me that a large foreign gentleman had come asking for me; that on finding me not there, he had declared his intention of waiting for me; that he had ordered an omelet and had then laid himself down on my bed. I walked upstairs, entered my bedroom, and saw something huge asleep; shaking this mass, I shouted: '*Hey! Hey! Who is this?*' The mass quivered and sat up. Its head was covered with a hairy bonnet, it wore a matching jersey and trousers of flecked wool, its face was stained with snuff and its tongue was sticking out. It was my cousin Moreau! I had not seen him since camp at Thionville. He was back from Russia and wished to enter



public service. My old *cicerone* in Paris was off to die at Nantes. So there vanished one of the principal characters in my *Memoirs*. I hope that, extended on a bed of asphodel, he still speaks of my verses, to Madame de Chastenay, if that delightful shade has descended to the *Elysian Fields*.

## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 6

#### *Les Martyrs*

In the spring of 1809 *Les Martyrs* was published. It was a work of conscience: I had consulted critics of knowledge and taste in Messieurs Fontanes, Bertin, Boissonade, and Malte-Brun, and I had submitted to their arguments. I wrote, un-wrote and re-wrote the same pages a hundred times and more. Of all my writings, it is the one where the language is most perfect.

I was not mistaken in my plan; now that my ideas have become common currency, no one denies that the struggle between two religions, the one ending, the other beginning, offers the Muses one of the richest, most fertile and most dramatic of subjects. So I thought I might nourish some not too outlandish hopes; but I forgot about the success of my first work: in this country, never count on two successes close together; one destroys the other's chances. If you have any talent for prose, take care not to reveal yourself in verse; if you are a distinguished man of letters, have no pretensions towards politics: such is the French spirit and its miseries. Self-esteem alarmed, and envy surprised by some author's happy debut, band together and lie in wait for the poet's second publication, in order to take a glittering revenge:

*Every hand at the inkwell, swore to be revenged.*

I had to pay for the foolish admiration I had gained by fraud on publication of *Le Génie du Christianisme*; I was forced to return what I had stolen. Alas! It was not necessary to put me through so much pain to rob me of that which I myself did not think I merited! If I had saved Christian Rome, I only requested *an obsidional crown*, of wreathed grasses gathered in the Eternal City.

The executor of justice in regard to all vanities was Monsieur Hoffman, to whom may God bring peace! The *Journal des Débats* was no longer free; its proprietors no longer had power over it, and censorship consigned me to condemnation there. Yet Monsieur Hoffman showed mercy towards the *Battle* of the *Franks* and several other bits of the work; if *Cymodocée* however seemed fine to him, he was too good a Catholic not to be indignant at the profane encounter of Christian truth with Mythological fable. *Velléda* could not save me. I was accused of the crime of having transformed Tacitus' Druid cousin into a Gaul, as if I had wanted anything more than to borrow her harmonious name! Bless me, if the French Christians, to whom I have rendered such great service in raising their altars once more, hadn't suddenly decided in their stupidity to be scandalized by Monsieur Hoffman's evangelical speech! The title of *Les Martyrs* had deceived them; they expected to read a martyrology, and a tiger, which only tore apart a daughter of Homer, seemed to them a sacrilege.

The true martyrdom, of Pope Pius VII whom Bonaparte had brought to Paris as his captive, caused no scandal, but they were all stirred by my fictions, which displayed little Christianity, they said. And it was the Bishop of Chartres who took it upon himself to mete out justice in regard to the terrible impieties of the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme*. Alas! One must say that these days his zeal is required in a good many other causes.

The Bishop of Chartres is the brother of my excellent friend, Monsieur de Clausel, a very fine Christian who will not allow himself to be carried away by as sublime a virtue as his brother, the critic.

I thought I ought to reply to this censure, as I had done in regard to *Le Génie du Christianisme*. Montesquieu, with his defence of *L'Esprit des Lois*, was my example. I was in error. Authors who are attacked may make the finest reply in the world, but only raise a smile from impartial minds and mockery from the crowd. They place themselves on treacherous ground: a defensive stance is antipathetic to the French character. When, in order to respond to the objections, I showed that in stigmatizing such and such a passage, one was attacking some fine relic of antiquity; defeated by the facts, they abandoned the affair saying then that *Les Martyrs* was merely a pastiche. If I justified the simultaneous presence of two religions by employing the authority of the Fathers of the Church, they replied that in the era in which I had set the action of *Les Martyrs*, paganism no longer existed as far as great minds were concerned.

I thought in all good faith that the work had failed; the violence of the attack had shaken my confidence as an author. Friends consoled me; they maintained that the proscription was unjustified, that the public, sooner or later, would take a different view; Monsieur de Fontanes especially stood firm: I was not Racine, but he could have been Boileau, and he never stopped saying to me: '*They will come round to it.*' His persuasiveness in this regard was so profound that it inspired him to delightful verse: 'Tasso, *wandering from town to town, etc. etc.*, without fear of compromising his taste or the authority of his judgement.

Indeed *Les Martyrs* revived; it achieved the honor of four consecutive editions; it has even enjoyed special favor among men of letters: they were grateful to me for a work which testified to serious study, to some care for style, to an elevated respect for language and taste.

The criticism of its content was swiftly abandoned. To say that I had intermingled the sacred and the profane, because I had depicted two cults existing side by side, each of which had its adherents, its altars, its priests, its ceremonies, was to say that I should have renounced all claim to be writing history. For whom did the martyrs die? – For Jesus Christ. Whom were they sacrificed to? – To the gods of the Empire. There *were* two religions, then.

The philosophical question, as to whether, under Diocletian, the Romans and Greeks believed in the gods of Homer, and whether public observance underwent change, that question, as a *poet*, did not concern me; as a *historian* I would have had much to say.

All of that is no longer an issue. *Les Martyrs* lives on, contrary to my initial expectation, and I have only had to occupy myself in carefully revising the text.

The failings of *Les Martyrs* lie in the *direct* presentation of the marvelous which, along with the rest of my Classical prejudices, I employed at the wrong moments. Frightened of innovation, it seemed impossible to me to avoid *hell* and *heaven*. The good and evil angels however were adequate for the course of the action, without delivering it over to hackneyed mechanisms. If the *Battle* of the *Franks*, Velléda, Jérôme, Augustine, Eudore, Cymodocée; if the descriptions of Naples and Greece could not obtain mercy for *Les Martyrs*, it was not for heaven and hell to rescue it. One of the passages most pleasing to Monsieur de Fontanes was this.

*‘Cymodocée sat in front of the prison window, and resting her head, adorned with a martyr’s veil, on her hand, sighed out these harmonious words:*

*“Fragile Italian vessels, cleave the calm and shining sea; slaves of Neptune, abandon your sails to the amorous breath of the winds, bend to the brisk oar. Return me to the protection of my husband and my father, by the happy banks of Pamissus.*

*Fly, Libyan birds, whose sinuous necks curve so gracefully, fly to the summit of Ithome, and say that a daughter of Homer goes to gaze on the laurels of Messene once more!*

*When shall I return to my bed of ivory, to the light of day so dear to mortals, to the meadows scattered with flowers that a pure stream waters, that modesty adorns with its breath!”*

*Le Génie du Christianisme* will remain my great work, because it produced or orchestrated a revolution in thought, and began a new era in the century’s literature. It was not the same with *Les Martyrs*; it came after that revolution had been carried through, it was merely an overabundant demonstration of my thesis; my style was no longer a novelty, and, except in the episode of Velléda and in the depiction of the manners of the Franks, my poem even suffers from the places which it frequented: the classical in it dominates the romantic.

Finally, the circumstances which contributed to the success of *Le Génie du Christianisme* no longer existed; the government, far from favoring me, was opposed to me. *Les Martyrs* earned me a redoubling of my persecution: the striking allusions shown in the portrait of Galerius and the depiction of Diocletian’s court did not escape the Imperial police; particularly since the English translator, who had no responsibilities to guard, and to whom it was all the same if he compromised me, highlighted the allusions in his preface.

The publication of *Les Martyrs* coincided with a fatal incident. It did not disarm the critics, graced with the ardor with which we grow heated in the corridors of power; they felt that literary criticism which tended to diminish the interest attached to my name might be agreeable to Bonaparte. He, like those millionaire bankers who give grand dinners and charge one for posting one’s letters, did not neglect his lesser profits.

## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 7

Armand de Chateaubriand

Armand de Chateaubriand whom you have seen as a companion of my childhood and met again in the Army of the Princes, with the deaf and dumb girl Libba, had remained in England. Married in Jersey, he was charged with the Princes' correspondence. Leaving on the 25th of September 1808, he was landed on the Breton coast, on the same day, at eleven at night, near Saint-Cast. The boat's crew comprised eleven men; only two were French, Roussel and Quintal.

Armand arrived at the house of Monsieur Delaunay-Boisé-Lucas, the elder, who lived in the village of Saint-Cast, where the English were once forced to re-embark: his host advised him to leave again; but the boat was already on course for Jersey once more. Armand, having so agreed with Monsieur Boisé-Lucas' son, gave him the packets entrusted to him by Monsieur Henri Larivière, the Princes' agent.

*'I returned to the coast on the 29th of September,' he says during one of his interrogations, 'where I remained for two nights without seeing the boat. The moon being very full, I left again and came back on the 14th or 15th of October. I stayed there till the 24th. I spent each night amongst the rocks, but to no avail; since my boat did not arrive, and, during the day I went back to the Boisé-Lucas' house. The same boat with the same crew, including Roussel and Quintal, was supposed to fetch me. As for precautions taken in conjunction with Monsieur Boisé-Lucas the elder, there were none apart from those I have already detailed.'*

The intrepid Armand, landing a few steps from his paternal home, as if on the inhospitable shores of the Crimea, gazed at the waves, searching in vain by moonlight for the vessel that might have rescued him. Long ago, when I had already left Combourg and was preparing to voyage to India, I had cast melancholy eyes on those same waves. Near the rocks of Saint-Cast where Armand lay, near the Pointe de la Varde where I had sat, a few miles of sea, crossed by our opposing gazes, witnessed the cares and separated the destinies of two men united by blood and name. It was in the midst of those waves too that I met Gesril for the last time. It often happens that in my dreams I see Gesril and Armand bathing the wounds in their brows in the depths, while the water in which we used to play in our childhood laps blood-red at my feet. (Note: The original transcripts of Armand's trial have been sent to me by an unknown and generous hand.)

Armand succeeded in embarking on a boat purchased at Saint-Malo; but driven back by a north-westerly wind he was obliged to put in once more. At last, on the 6th of January, aided by a sailor called Jean Brien, he launched a little stranded dinghy, and seized another which was afloat. He describes his voyage, which recalls my own fate and adventures, in his interrogation of the 18th of March:

*'From nine in the evening when we embarked, until about two in the morning, the weather was favorable. Judging that we were then not far from the rocks called Les Mainquiers, we anchored with the intention of waiting for daylight; but the wind having freshened, and fearing it would strengthen, we continued our course. A few minutes later, the sea became very rough, and our compass having been shattered by a wave, we remained unsure of the direction we were heading. The first land we had knowledge of on the*

7th (it may have been about noon then) was the Normandy coast, which forced us to put about and we returned again and anchored near some rocks called Les Écrehous, situated between the Normandy coast and Jersey. The strong contrary winds obliged us to remain in that situation for the rest of the day and the 8th. On the morning of the 9th, as soon as it was light, I said to Depagne that the wind seemed to have lessened, seeing that our boat was not laboring much, and told him to check the direction of the wind. He said he could no longer see the rocks near which we had anchored. I realized then that we were adrift and had lost our anchor. The violence of the storm left us no choice but to make for the coast. As we could not see land, I did not know how far away from it we were. It was at that moment that I threw my papers into the sea, after taking the precaution of weighting them with a stone. We then ran before the wind and made the coast at about nine in the morning, at Bretteville-sur-Ay, in Normandy.

We were met on the coast by the customs officers, who took me out of my boat half-dead, my feet and legs being frozen. They lodged us both at the house of the lieutenant of the Bretteville brigade. Two days later, Depagne was taken to the prison at Coutances, and since then, I have not seen him. A few days afterwards, I was myself transferred to the gaol in that town; on the next day I was taken to Saint-Lô by the sergeant, where I remained for eight days with the said sergeant. I appeared once before the Prefect of the department, and, on the 26th of January, I left with the captain, and sergeant of the constabulary, for Paris, where I arrived on the 28th. They took me to the office of Monsieur Desmarest, at the Police Ministry, and from there to the prison of La Grande-Force.

Armand had the winds, the waves and the Imperial police against him; Bonaparte was in league with the storms. The gods indulged in a large expenditure of anger against one puny human life.

The packet Armand threw into the sea was cast up on the beach at Notre-Dame-d'Alloue, near Valognes. The documents enclosed in this packet served as evidence in his conviction; there were thirty-two of them. Quintal, returning in his boat to the Breton beaches to take Armand off, had also been shipwrecked, by the perversity of fate, in Normandy waters, a few days before my cousin. The crew of Quintal's boat had talked; the Prefect of Saint-Lô had learnt that Monsieur de Chateaubriand was leader of the Princes' enterprises. When he heard that a vessel crewed by only two men had run aground, he had no doubt that Armand was one of the two, since all the fishermen spoke of him as the most fearless man they had ever seen at sea.

On the 20th of January 1809, the Prefect of La Manche, sent his account of Armand's arrest to the Ministry of Police. His letter began thus:

*'My conjectures are completely vindicated: Chateaubriand is here; it is he who landed on the coast at Bretteville and who has assumed the name John Fall.*

*Anxious, despite the extremely precise orders I had given, that John Fall had not yet arrived at Saint-Lô, I charged the sergeant of the gendarmerie Mauduit, a reliable and very active individual, to go and find John Fall wherever he was, and bring him to me, in whatever state he might be. He found him at Coutances, at the moment when it had been arranged for him to be transferred to the hospital, to treat his legs which had been frost-bitten.*

*Fall appeared before me today. I had Lelièvre placed in a separate room, from which he could see John Fall's arrival without being perceived. When Lelièvre saw him climbing the stairs near this room, he cried out, striking his hands together and changing color: "It is Chateaubriand! How has he been taken?"*

*Lelièvre was not pre-warned at all. This exclamation had been drawn from him by his surprise. He begged me later not to say that he had named Chateaubriand, or he would be lost.*

*I kept John Fall ignorant of the fact that I knew who he was.'*

Taken to Paris, and imprisoned in La Force, Armand endured secret interrogation at the military gaol of the Abbaye. Bertrand, of the first demi-brigade of veterans, had been nominated by General Hulin, who had been appointed Military Commandant of Paris, judge-advocate of the military commission charged, by a decree of the 25th of February, to investigate Armand's case.

The people implicated were Monsieur de Goyon, whom Armand had sent to Brest, and Monsieur de Boisé-Lucas, the younger, whom he had charged with transmitting letters from Henri de Larivière to Messieurs Laya and Sicard in Paris.

In a letter of the 13th of March, addressed to Fouché, Armand wrote: '*May the Emperor deign to restore the liberty of men who now languish in prison for having shown me too much friendship. At all events, let their freedom be restored, in equal measure. I commend my unfortunate family to the Emperor's generosity.*'

The error, in a man of human feelings addressing himself to a hyena, is painful to witness. Nor was Bonaparte the Florentine lion; he did not give up the child because of the mother's tears. I had written to ask Fouché for an interview; he granted it, and assured me, with all the coolness displayed by revolutionary indifference, '*that he had seen Armand and I could be tranquil; that Armand had said he would die well, and that indeed he showed a very resolute air.*' If I had suggested to Fouché that he was to die, would he have preserved that deliberate tone and superb nonchalance with regard to himself?

I applied to Madame de Rémusat, begging her to deliver a letter to the Empress asking the Emperor for justice and mercy. Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu told me, at Arenenberg, of the fate of my letter: Joséphine gave it to the Emperor; he appeared to hesitate as he read it, then, found some phrase that annoyed him and flung it impatiently into the fire. I had forgotten that one should only show pride on one's own behalf.

Monsieur de Goyon, condemned with Armand, suffered his sentence. Yet Madame la Baronne-Duchesse de Montmorency, the daughter of Madame de Matignon, to whom the Goyons were allied, was pressed to intervene on his behalf. A Montmorency in service should have been able to obtain anything, if it were enough to prostitute a name to convert an old monarchy into a new power. Madame de Goyon, who was unable to save her husband, did save young Boisé-Lucas. Everything contributed to this misfortune, which struck down mere unknowns; one would have said the end of the world was at hand: with storms afloat, ambushes on land, Bonaparte, the sea, Louis XIV's murderers, and the presence of some unknown *passion* perhaps, the mysterious spirit of earthly catastrophe. No one else perceived these things; it was

only I who was struck by them all, and they lived on in my memory alone. What did they matter to Napoleon, these insects crushed by his hand on the crown?

On the day of execution, I wanted to accompany my comrade onto his last field of battle; I could find not a single carriage, and hurried on foot to the Grenelle Plain. I arrived, drenched in sweat, a moment too late: Armand had been shot against the outer wall of Paris. His skull was shattered; a butcher's dog was licking his blood and brains. I followed the cart which carried the bodies of Armand and his two companions, plebeian and noble, Quintal and Goyon, to the Vaugirard cemetery where I had buried Monsieur de La Harpe. I saw my cousin for the last time, without being able to recognize him: the bullets had disfigured him, he had no face left; I could not see the ravages of time there, nor even see death there within that shapeless, bleeding orb; he remained youthful in my mind as at the time of Libba and Thionville. He was shot on Good Friday: the Crucified One appears to me at the end of all my ills. When I walk along the ramparts of the Grenelle Plain, I stop to look at the bullet marks, still visible on the wall. If Bonaparte's lead had left no other traces, he would no longer be spoken of.

A strange linkage of destinies! General Hulin, the Military Commandant of Paris, named the commission which blew out Armand's brains; he had been, in the past, named as President of the commission which shattered the Duc d'Enghien's skull. After that first misfortune, ought he not to have abstained completely from councils of war? And I, I spoke of the death of the Great Condé's descendant without mentioning General Hulin's part in the execution of an unknown soldier, my relative. For judging the judges of that tribunal at Vincennes, I have doubtless, in turn, received my commission from Heaven.



## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 8

The Years 1811, 1812, 1813 and 1814 – Publication of the Itinerary – A letter from Cardinal de Bausset –  
The death of Chénier – I am received as a member of the Academy – The matter of my speech –  
The Decennial Prize

Paris, 1839

The year 1811 was one of the most remarkable of my literary career. I published *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, I took Monsieur de Chénier's place at the Academy, and I began to write the *Memoirs* which I have now completed.

The success of the *Itinerary* was as total as that of *Les Martyrs* had been contentious. It is no slight scribbler on paper who, on publication of his *farrago* receives letters of congratulation. Among the fresh compliments which were addressed to me, I must not allow one letter, from a man of worth and virtue, to be lost, he who has written two works whose authority is recognized, and who has left almost nothing more to be said on the subjects of Bossuet and Fénelon. The Bishop of Alais, Cardinal de Bausset, is the historian of those great prelates. His praise with regard to me is infinitely exaggerated, which is the custom when writing to an author and counts for nothing; but the Cardinal makes plain the general opinion at that moment regarding the *Itinerary*; relative to Carthage he foresees objections which might be raised against my sense of the geography; however, that sense has prevailed, and I have set Dido's harbors in their proper place. It is a joy to find once more in this letter the eloquence of a select society, that style rendered serious and sweet by politeness, religion and manners; an excellence of tone which we are so remote from these days.

'Villemoisson, near Longjumeau (Seine et Oise).  
25th March 1811.

*'You ought to receive, Monsieur, and have received the just tribute of public recognition and approval; but I can assure you that none of your readers can have enjoyed your fascinating work with a truer sentiment. You are the first and only traveller who has no need of etchings and drawings to bring places and monuments which recall beautiful memories and grand images before his readers' eyes. Your soul has felt it all, your imagination has painted it all, and the reader feels with your soul and sees with your eyes.*

*I can only give you a very feeble impression of what I experienced from the first pages, in travelling the coast of the Isle of Corfu with you, and in watching all those immortal men reach shore, whom opposing destinies have successively led there. A few lines have sufficed for you to sketch forever the traces of their footsteps; they will always be found there within your itinerary, which will preserve them more faithfully than so many of the marble sculptures which have failed to preserve the great names which were entrusted to them.*

*I know the monuments of Athens at present as one seeks to know them. I have already seen them in fine etchings, I have admired them, but I have not touched them. One too often forgets that if the architects*

*have need of their exact description, their measures and proportions, men have need of rediscovering the spirit and the genius which conceived the idea of those great monuments.*

*You have given back to the Pyramids their noble and profound intention that frivolous orators have not even perceived.*

*How grateful I am to you, Monsieur, for having doomed that stupid and savage nation to a just execration, they who, for twelve hundred years, have made a desolation of the finest countries on earth! One smiles with you in hopes of seeing them return to the desert from which they came.*

*You have inspired me with a transient feeling of indulgence for the Arabs, in sympathy with the noble relationship you entered into with the savages of North America.*

*Providence seems to have led you to Jerusalem to witness the latest representation of the primal scenes of Christianity. If it is no longer given to the eyes of man to see that tomb once more, the only one which will have nothing to reveal on the last day, Christians will always find it in the Gospels, and meditative and sensitive souls in your descriptions.*

*Critics will not fail to reproach you in regard to the men and events in which you have clothed the ruins of Carthage, which you cannot have depicted since they no longer exist. But, I entreat you, Monsieur, to content yourself merely with asking them if they would not be extremely unhappy themselves if they failed to find them in such engaging descriptions.*

*You have the right, Monsieur, to enjoy a kind of glory belonging exclusively to yourself in regard to this species of creation; but there is a still more satisfying pleasure for a character such as yours, that is to have endowed the creations of your genius with the nobility of your spirit and the elevation of your sentiments. It is that which will ensure, for all time, that your name receives the esteem, admiration and respect of all the friends of religion, virtue, and honor.*

*It is under that title that I beg you, Monsieur, to accept my homage with all due sentiments.*

*L.-F. DE BAUSSET, former bishop of Alais.'*

Monsieur de Chénier died on the 18th of January 1811. My friends had the disastrous idea of urging me to take his place at the Institute. They claimed that exposed as I was to the head of state's enmity, and police suspicion and harassment, it was essential for me to join a body which was then powerful because of its renown and the men which composed it; that protected behind this shield I could work in peace.

I had an unshakeable aversion to occupying a place, even a non-governmental one; it reminded me forcibly of what had cost me the first one I held. Chénier's heritage seemed perilous to me; I could say nothing without exposing myself; I would not pass over the regicide in silence, though Cambacérès was second in command of the State; I was determined to make my representations in support of liberty heard and to raise my voice against tyranny; I wished to dwell on the horrors of 1793, express my regrets regarding our kings' lost relatives, grieve over the misfortunes of those who remained loyal to them. My friends replied that I was wrong; that various words in praise of the head of state, obligatory in the

Academy's proceedings, praise of which, in this respect, I considered Bonaparte worthy, would force him to swallow any truths that I wished to utter, that I would at the same time own the honor of having defended my opinions and the pleasure of having ended Madame de Chateaubriand's apprehensions. By dint of their hammering at me, I surrendered, weary of the struggle; but I told them that they were wrong; that Bonaparte, himself, would never mistake my commonplaces regarding his son, his wife, his glory; that he would only register the criticism more deeply; that he would remember the man who resigned over the death of the Duc d'Enghien, and the author of the article which caused the Mercure's suppression; that finally, instead of guaranteeing my tranquility, I would rekindle the opposition towards me. They were soon obliged to recognize the truth of my words: it is true that they had not anticipated the recklessness of my acceptance speech.

I had made the customary visits to the members of the Academy. Madame de Vintimille introduced me to the Abbé Morellet. We found him sitting in an armchair in front of the fire; he was sleeping, and the *Itinerary*, which he was reading, had fallen from his hands. Waking with a start at the sound of my name being announced by his maidservant, he raised his head and cried: '*There are tedious parts, tedious parts!*' I told him, laughing, that I well knew it, and would abridge the next edition. He was a good man and promised me his support, despite *Atala*. When, *La Monarchie selon la Charte* subsequently appeared, he could not recall a like political work having for author the singer of *a daughter of the Floridas*. Did Grotius not write the tragedy of Adam and Eve, and Montesquieu the *Temple of Gnidus*? It is true that I was no Grotius or Montesquieu.

The election took place; I passed scrutiny by a sufficient majority. I then set to work on my acceptance speech, I wrote and rewrote it twenty times, always dissatisfied with myself: now, wishing it to be suitable for the purpose, I would find it too forceful; now, indignation reviving, I would find it too feeble. I was unsure how to mix the dose prescribed by the academic school. If, despite my antipathy to the man, I had wished to show him the admiration which I felt for the public aspects of his life, I would have gone well beyond the peroration. Milton, whom I cite at the start of the speech, furnished me with an example:

*'...You have not only eclipsed the achievements of all our kings, but even those which have been fabled of our heroes. Often reflect what a dear pledge the beloved land of your nativity has entrusted to your care; and that liberty which she once expected only from the chosen flower of her talents and her virtues, she now expects from you only, and by you only hopes to obtain. Revere the fond expectations which we cherish, the solitudes of your anxious country; revere the looks and the wounds of your brave companions in arms, who, under your banners, have so strenuously fought for liberty; revere the shades of those who perished in the contest; revere also the opinions and the hopes which foreign states entertain concerning us, who promise to themselves so many advantages from that liberty, which we have so bravely acquired, from the establishment of that new government, which has begun to shed its splendor on the world, which, if it be suffered to vanish like a dream, would involve us in the deepest abyss of shame; and lastly, revere yourself; and, after having endured so many sufferings and encountered so many perils for the sake of liberty, do not suffer it, now it is obtained, either to be violated by yourself, or in any one instance impaired by others. You cannot be truly free, unless we are free too; for such is the nature of things, that he, who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own and become a slave.'*

Johnson only cited the praise given to the Protector, in order to distinguish the republican from himself; the fine passage I have just translated shows the counter-balance to those praises. Johnson's criticism is forgotten; Milton's defence lives on: everything that entangles itself in the parties and passions of the moment dies like the one and with the other.

My speech being ready, I was called to read it before the commission nominated to hear it: it was rejected by all but two or three members. You should have seen the fear of the proud republicans who listened to me, whom the independence of my opinions terrified: they shook with indignation and fright at a single mention of freedom. Monsieur Daru took the speech to Saint-Cloud. Bonaparte declared that if it had been given, he would have had the doors of the Institute closed and would have had me thrown into the depths of a deep pit for the rest of my life.

I received this note from Monsieur Daru:

*'Saint-Cloud, 28th April 1811.*

*I have the honor to inform Monsieur de Chateaubriand that, if he should have the time or occasion to visit Saint-Cloud, I will be able to return the speech which he has had the goodness to entrust to me. I seize this occasion to renew my assurance of the great consideration with which I have the honor to salute him.*

*DARU.'*

I went to Saint-Cloud and Monsieur Daru returned me the manuscript, torn here and there, marked *ab irato* (in anger) with parentheses and traces of Bonaparte's pencil: the lion's claws had pierced it everywhere, and I took a kind of irritated pleasure in believing I could feel them in my side. Monsieur Daru did not hide Napoleon's anger from me for an instant; but he told me that by retaining the peroration, except for a dozen words or so, and by changing almost all the rest, I would be welcomed with great applause. The speech had been copied at the château, while suppressing a few passages and interpolating others. A short time after, it appeared in the provinces, printed after that fashion.

This speech is one of the best proofs of the independence of my opinions and the firmness of my principles. Monsieur Suard, free and steadfast, said that the speech, read to the full Academy would have made the vaulted ceilings of the room crumble to the thunder of applause. Could one indeed imagine ardent praise of liberty proclaimed in the midst of imperial servility?

I had preserved that speech with religious care; misfortune decreed that quite recently on leaving the Marie-Thérèse Infirmary, a pile of papers were burnt among which the speech perished. I regret it not because it might be worth something as an Academy speech; but for the uniqueness of the relic. I had set there the names of my colleagues whose works had furnished me with a pretext for displaying various honorable sentiments.

In the manuscript which was returned to me, the beginning of the speech referring to Milton's views was *crossed out*, from margin to margin, by Bonaparte's own hand. A section of my complaint about the isolation from things in which they sought to keep literature was equally *stigmatized* by the pencil. My

praise of Abbé Delille, which recalled the *emigration*, the fidelity the poet showed towards the misfortunes of the royal family, and the sufferings of his companions in exile, was placed in *parentheses*; the praise of Monsieur de Fontanes had a cross. Almost all I had said regarding Monsieur Chénier, his brother, on my family, on the expiatory altars being planned for Saint-Denis, was *hatched* with lines. The paragraph beginning with the words: '*Monsieur de Chénier adored liberty, etc.*' had a *double longitudinal erasure*. I am still unable to understand why the corrupt text of the speech, published by the agents of Empire, has quite correctly retained that paragraph. '*Monsieur de Chénier adored liberty; should we consider it criminal in him? Even the knights, if they rose now from their tombs, would follow the luminaries of our century. We would see an illustrious alliance formed between honor and liberty, as, in the reigns of the Valois, Gothic crenellations crowned with infinite grace our monuments' orders borrowed from Greece.*

*Is liberty not the greatest human good, and the first human need? It inspires genius, lifts the heart, and is as essential to the friends of the Muses as the air they breathe. The arts can, up to a certain point, live in a state of dependency, because they serve a language apart not understood by the crowd; but literature, which speaks a universal language, languishes and dies in irons. How can one trace pages worthy of future ages, if one must forbid, in writing, every generous feeling, every great and vigorous thought? Liberty is so naturally a friend of the sciences and literature, that she takes refuge with them when she is banished from the heart of the nation. It is you, gentlemen, whom she charges with writing her history, taking revenge on her enemies, transmitting her name and her worship to the furthest posterity.'* I am inventing nothing, altering nothing: one can read the passage as printed in the pirated edition. The oburgation of tyranny which follows this passage on liberty, and which forms a counterpart to it, is suppressed in its entirety in that edition cut by the police. The peroration is retained: only the praise of our victories, with which I intended to honor France, is turned entirely to Napoleon's profit.

All was not over when it was declared that I would not be welcome at the Academy and that my speech had been returned to me. They wished to compel me to write another; I declared that I stood by the first one and would not write a second. People, unknown to me, full of grace, generosity and courage, showed interest in me. Madame Lindsay, who had accompanied me back to Calais, spoke to Madame Gay who addressed herself to Madame Regnaud de Saint-Jean-d'Angély; they succeeded in taking it as far as the Duc de Rovigo and suggested he set me aside. The women of that time interposed their beauty between power and misfortune.

This whole business carried on, like that of the Decennial Prize, until 1812. Bonaparte, who was persecuting me, had nevertheless asked the Academy, regarding this prize, why *Le Génie du Christianisme* had not been appointed to the ranks. The Academy explained: several of my colleagues wrote a judgement hardly favorable to my work. I might have said to them what a Greek poet said of a swallow: '*Daughter of Attica, fed on honey, you who sing so beautifully, you capture a cicada, a fine singer like yourself, and carry her off to feed your little ones. Both winged, both inhabiting the same places, both celebrating the birth of spring, will you not set her free once more? It is not right for one singer to be slain by the beak of one of its peers.*'

## BOOK XVIII

### CHAPTER 9

#### *L'Essai sur les Révolutions – Les Natchez*

This mixture of anger against me and attraction for me which Bonaparte displayed was curious and persistent: he wished me imprisoned for the rest of my days at Vincennes, then suddenly asked the Institute why he had not spoken to me on the occasion of the Decennial Prize. He did more, he declared to Fontanes that, since the Institute did not find me worthy enough to compete for the prize, he would give me one, by nominating me as general superintendent of all the libraries in France; an appointment with the same status as an ambassador of the first rank. Bonaparte had not relinquished his first idea of employing me in a diplomatic career: he refused to admit, since he well knew, that I had ceased to belong to the Foreign Office. And yet, despite these generous plans, his Prefect of Police invited me, on the contrary, to absent myself from Paris, and I went off to continue my *Memoirs* in Dieppe.

Bonaparte fell into the role of a tormenting schoolboy; he dug out the *Essay on Revolutions* and delighted in the battle he drew me into on that subject. A Monsieur Damaze de Raymond became my champion: I went to the Rue Vivienne to thank him. On his chimneypiece among the good-luck charms he had a skull; some time later he was killed in a duel and his charming face went to join the terrifying visage which seemed to have called to him. Everyone fought then: one of the informers charged with arresting Georges Cadoudal received a bullet in the head from him.

In order to cut short my powerful adversary's attacks of bad faith, I addressed myself to that Monsieur de Pommereul whom I mentioned on my first arrival in Paris: he had become Director-General of Censorship, responsible for printing and book-selling: I asked his permission to reprint the *Essai* in its entirety. My correspondence and the result of that correspondence can be seen in the preface to the 1826 edition of *L'Essai sur les Révolutions*, in the second book of my complete works. Moreover, the Imperial government had the best of reasons for refusing a reprint of the *entire* work; the *Essay* was, neither in relation to liberty, nor the legitimate monarchy, a book which ought to have been published while despotism and usurpation reigned. The police showed an air of impartiality in allowing something to be said in my faveur, and they laughed while preventing me doing the one thing which could have protected me. On the restoration of Louis XVIII, the *Essai* was exhumed once more; as they had chosen to use it against me during the Empire, on the grounds of freedom, they chose to deploy it against me, after the Restoration, on religious grounds. I have made such complete and honorable amends for my errors in the notes to the new edition of the *Essai historique*, that there is nothing left to reproach me with. Posterity will arrive, and make its pronouncements on the *book* and the *commentary*, if these old matters still interest it. I dare to hope it will judge the *Essai* as my grey head judges it; since in advancing through life, one acquires the impartiality of that future which one nears. The *book* and the *notes* set me before mankind such as I was at the start of my career, such as I am at the end of that career.

Moreover, that work which I have treated with merciless rigor offers a compendium of my existence as poet, moralist and politician of the future. The work's sap overflows, the audacity of its opinions is taken as far as it might go. I am forced to recognize that, in the diverse paths I took, prejudice did not lead me, I was not blinded by any cause, no interest guided me, that the decisions I made were my own choice.

In the *Essay*, my independence in religion and politics is total; I question everything: a *republican*, I serve the monarchy; a *philosopher*, I honor religion. These are in no way contradictions, they are consequences determined by the vagueness of theory and the precision of practice among men. My spirit, created to believe in nothing, not even myself, created to scorn everything, grandeur and wretchedness, nations and kings, has nevertheless been dominated by an instinct for reason which commands it to yield to whatever has been recognized as fine: religion, justice, humanity, equality, liberty, glory. Whatever one dreams now of the future, whatever the present generation imagines it has revealed of a new society, founded on quite different principles to the old society, all that is announced positively in the *Essay*. I have anticipated for thirty years what those who proclaim it have to tell of an unknown world. My actions have been those of the old civilization, my thoughts of the new; the former arose from duty, the latter from my very nature.

The *Essay* was not an impious book: it was a book of doubt and sadness. I have already spoken of it.

Besides, I was forced to exaggerate my faults, and re-purchase with ideas of order all those passionate ideas spread throughout my work. At the start of my career I feared I had led the young astray; I have to atone for it to them, and I owe them at least one more piece of advice. If only they knew that one can struggle successfully with a troubled nature; moral beauty, divine beauty, superior to all earthly dreams, that I have seen; it only needs a little courage to reach out and grasp it.

In order to complete what I have to say regarding my literary career, I must mention the work which began it, and which remained in manuscript until the year when I added it to my *Complete Works*.

At the start of *Les Natchez*, the preface tells how the work was retrieved from England through the care and kind investigations of Messieurs de Thuisy.

A manuscript from which I was able to extract *Atala*, *René*, and several descriptions for *Le Génie du Christianisme* was not altogether sterile. That first manuscript was written continuously, without sections; all the subjects were jumbled together; travel, natural history, dramatic parts, etc.; but besides this manuscript with its single outpouring there existed another divided into books. In this second work, I had not only proceeded to divide the material up, but I had also altered the nature of the composition, in transmuting it from a novel into an epic.

A young man, who heaps up his ideas, inventions, studies, and reading, pell-mell, must produce chaos; but also in that chaos there is a certain fecundity which belongs to the powers of youth.

What happened to me has never perhaps happened to any other author: the re-reading after thirty years of a manuscript that I had totally forgotten about.

I had one danger to fear. In passing the brush over the painting once more, I might dim the colors; a surer hand, but a less rapid one, ran the risk of making the least correct traits vanish, but the most lively touches of youth too: it was necessary to leave the foam on the young courser's bit. If there are things in *Les Natchez* which I would not chance today without trembling, there are also things I could no longer write, notably René's letter in the second volume. It is in my early manner, and reproduces *René* exactly: I am

not sure if the *Renés* who have followed me could have made any better an approach to speaking of madness.

*Les Natchez* opens with an invocation to the wilderness and the starry night, the supreme divinities of my youth:

*‘In the shade of the American forests, I will sing the songs of solitude, such as have never been heard by mortal ears; I will tell of your travails, O Natchez, O nation of Louisiana of whom only the memories remain! Do the misfortunes of an obscure inhabitant of the woods have less right to our pity than those of other men? And are the mausoleums of kings in our churches more moving than an Indian’s grave beneath his native oak-tree?’*

*And may you, light of my meditations, star of the night, be Pindar’s star for me! Move before my footsteps, through the unknown regions of the New World, that I may discover by your light the delightful secrets of these wildernesses!’*

My twin natures are merged in this strange work, particularly in the primitive original. There one finds political incident and a novelistic plot; but throughout the narration one hears everywhere a singing voice, which seems to rise from some unknown region.

#### THE END OF MY LITERARY CAREER.

From 1812 to 1814, a mere two years saw the end of the Empire, and those two years, the prospect of which has been anticipated somewhat, I employed in research regarding France and the composition of several books of these *Memoirs*; but I printed nothing. My life of poetry and erudition was finally brought to an end with the publication of my three great works, *Le Génie du Christianisme*, *Les Martyrs*, and *L’Itinéraire*. My political writings commenced at the Restoration; my active political career began with those writings also. So here my literary career can be properly said to terminate; carried along by the tide of years, I have neglected it; it is only this year, 1839, that I recall the days of 1800 to 1814, now left behind.

That literary career, as I have tried to persuade you, was no less difficult than my careers as *traveller* and *soldier*; it equally involved effort, battles and blood in the arena; it was not all a matter of the Muses and the Castilian spring; my political career was even stormier.

Perhaps ruins will mark the place occupied by my grove of Acadame. *Le Génie de Christianisme* began the religious revolt against the philosophism of the eighteenth century. I inaugurated at the same time that revolution which menaces our language, since it is not possible to have a renewal of ideas without stylistic innovation. Will there be other forms of art after me at present unknown? Can we forsake our current projects in order to advance, as we have forsaken past projects in order to take a step forward? Are there boundaries one cannot cross, because one will come up against the very nature of things? Are not those boundaries located where modern languages separate out, in the obsolescence of those same languages, in the human vanities that the new society has turned them into? Languages only track the movements of civilization in the moment before they reach perfection; reaching their apogee, they hang motionless for a moment, then fall without being able to rise again.



Now, the tale I am telling rejoins those first chapters of my political life, written previously at different dates. I feel a little more courage in returning to the completed parts of my edifice. When I set to work again, I trembled lest the ancient son of Coelus might find the golden trowel of Troy's builder turning into a leaden trowel. Yet it seems to me that my memory, charged with shedding its remembrances upon me, has not failed me completely: have you felt the iciness of winter pervade my narration? Do you detect a vast difference between the dead ashes that I have tried to revive, and the living people I have led you to envisage in recounting my early days to you? My years are my secretaries; when one or other of them dies, she passes the pen to her younger sister, and I continue to dictate; as they are sisters, they have almost the same hand.

### **End of Book XVIII**

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 1

Bonaparte

Youth is a pleasant thing; at the commencement of life, crowned with flowers, it goes to conquer Sicily and the delightful plains of Enna. The prayer is intoned in a loud voice by the priest of Neptune; libations are poured from golden cups; the crowd, bordering the sea, joins its invocations to those of the pilot; the paean is chanted, while the sail is deployed in the dawn light and breeze. Alcibiades, clothed in purple and beautiful as Amor, is visible aboard his trireme, proud of the seven chariots he had entered in the arena at Olympia. But scarcely is the island of Alcinous passed, and the illusion vanishes: Alcibiades, banished, will grow old far from his country and die, pierced by arrows, on Timandra's breast. The companions of his first dreams, slaves in Syracuse, have nothing to ease the burden of their chains but a few verses from Euripides.

You have seen my youth leave shore; it lacked the beauty of Pericles' ward, a schoolboy at Aspasia's knee; but it had its morning hours: and its passions and its dreams, God knows! I have described these dreams for you: today, returning home after long exile, I have only truths sad as my years to tell you of. If I can still hear the notes of the lyre sometimes, they are the last harmonies of a poet who seeks to heal himself of the wounds made by the arrows of time, or to console himself for the servitude of age.

You know the mutability of my life in my roles as traveller and soldier; you have understood my literary existence from 1800 to nigh on 1813, the year when you left me at the Vallée-aux-Loups, which at that time still belonged to me, as my political career began. I will presently enter on that career: but, before penetrating that region, I must cover the historical facts which I skipped while concerning myself with my works and my own affairs: these facts are to do with Napoleon. Passing on to him then; let me speak of that vast edifice which had been constructed beyond my dreaming. I will become a historian now without ceasing to be a writer of memoirs; a public topic will support my private confidences; my little tales will cluster round my narration.

When the Revolutionary War broke out, Europe's kings did not comprehend it; they saw a revolt where they should have seen national change, the end and beginning of a world: they deceived themselves into believing that it only meant the addition of a few provinces torn from France to their own States: they believed in the old military tactics, the old diplomatic treaties, and negotiations between governments; but conscripts went chasing after Frederick's grenadiers, monarchs went to seek peace in the ante-chambers of obscure demagogues, and dreadful revolutionary ideas undid the schemes of old Europe on the scaffold. That old Europe thought to attack France; it failed to see that a new age was upon it.

Bonaparte in the course of success, full of perversity, seemed to call for the abolition of royal dynasties, in order to render his own the oldest. He made kings of the Electors of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and Saxony; he gave the crown of Naples to Murat, that of Spain to Joseph, that of Holland to Louis, that of Westphalia to Jérôme; his sister, Élisa Bacciochi, was Duchess of Lucca; he was, by his own account, Emperor of the French, and King of Italy, which kingdom included Venice, Tuscany, Parma and Piacenza; Piedmont being re-united with France; he consented to one of his captains, Bernadotte, reigning in Sweden; by the Treaty of the Confederation of the Rhine, he exercised the rights of the House of

Austria over Germany; he was declared Mediator of the Swiss Republic; he had flattened Prussia; without possessing a single ship he had declared a blockade of the British Isles. England despite its fleet was on the point of being denied a European port where it might discharge a single bale of merchandise or post a letter.

The Papal States were part of the French Empire; the Tiber was a department of France. In the streets of Paris one saw cardinals, semi-captive, who, sticking their heads out of the doors of their carriages, asked: '*Does he live here, the King of.....?*' – '*No,*' the doorman would reply, '*he's further on.*' Austria only made amends by handing over its daughter: the rider from the south claimed Honorina from Valentinian with half the provinces of the Empire.

How were these miracles achieved? What qualities did the man possess who gave birth to them? I am going to follow the course of Bonaparte's great career, which nevertheless passed so swiftly that his age occupies a brief part of the years covered by these *Memoirs*. The fastidious reproduction of genealogies, the cold examination of facts, and the insipid verification of dates are duties to which the writer is constrained.

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 2

#### Bonaparte – His Family

The first Buonaparte (Bonaparte) of whom there is mention in recent annals is Jacopo Buonaparte, who, as augur of future conquest, left us his history of the Sack of Rome in 1527, of which he was an eye-witness. Napoléon-Louis Bonaparte, son of the Duchesse de Saint-Leu, who died after the insurrection in the Romagna, translated this curious document into French; at the head of the translation he has placed a genealogy of Buonaparte: the translator says *‘that he will content himself with filling in the gaps in the preface written by the Cologne editor, by publishing authentic details of the Bonaparte family; scraps of history,’* he says, *‘which have been almost entirely forgotten, but interesting at least to those who like to discover, in the annals of time past, the origin of a more recent example.’*

There follows a genealogy in which one finds a Chevalier Nordille Buonaparte, who, on the 2nd of April 1226, stood surety for Prince Conradin of Suabia (he whose head the Duke of Anjou severed) for the value of the customs rights of the said Prince’s effects. Around 1255 the proscription of Trevisan families began: a Bonaparte branch established itself in Tuscany, where one meets with them in the high offices of State. Louis-Marie-Fortuné Buonaparte, of the branch established at Sarzana, crossed to Corsica in 1612, settled in Ajaccio and became head of the Corsican branch of the Bonapartes. The Bonapartes carry arms of *gules two bends sinister between two stars or*.

There is another genealogy that Monsieur Panckoucke has placed at the head of a collection of Bonaparte’s writings; it differs in several details from that given by Napoléon-Louis. Madame d’Abrantès, on her side, thinks that Bonaparte might be a Comnène, alleging that the name Bonaparte is a literal translation of the Greek *Caloméros*, the surname of the Comnène. Napoleon-Louis feels he must end his genealogy with these words: *‘I have omitted many details, since these titles of nobility are only an object of curiosity for a small number of people, and besides the Bonaparte family acquires no luster from them.’*

*‘He who serves his country well needs no ancestors.’*

Despite this philosophical line of verse, the genealogy *exists*. Napoléon-Louis wished to make the concession to his century of a democratic apothegm without eliciting its consequence.

All this is curious: Jacopo Buonaparte, historian of the Sack of Rome, and the detention of Pope Clement VII by the soldiers of the Constable de Bourbon, is of the same blood as Napoleon Bonaparte, destroyer of so many towns, master of Rome become a prefecture, King of Italy, conqueror of the Bourbon crown and gaoler of Pius VII, after having been consecrated Emperor of the French by the Pontiff’s own hand. The translator of the work of Jacopo Buonaparte is Napoléon-Louis Buonaparte, nephew of Napoleon and son of the King of Holland, brother of Napoleon; and this young man chances to die during the late insurrection in the Romagna, some distance from the two towns where the mother and widow of Napoleon are exiled, at the moment when the Bourbons tumble from their throne for the third time.

As it would have been quite difficult to make Napoleon the son of Jupiter Ammon by the serpent beloved of Olympias, or a descendant of the grandson of Venus by Anchises, liberated scholars (such as Las Cases) found a different marvel to employ: they demonstrated to the Emperor that he was descended in direct line from the Iron Mask. The Governor of the Îles Sainte-Marguerite was called Bonpart; he had a daughter; the Iron Mask, twin brother of Louis XIV, fell in love with the daughter of his gaoler and secretly married her, by the Court's own admission. The children born of this union were taken clandestinely to Corsica, bearing their mother's name; the Bonparts transformed themselves into Bonapartes due to the change of language. So the Iron Mask became a mysterious brazen-faced ancestor of the great man, connected in this way to the great king.

The Franchini-Bonaparte branch of the family carried three golden fleurs-de-lis on its shield. Napoleon smiled at this genealogy with an expression of incredulity; but he did smile: it was ever a claim of royalty of benefit to his family. Napoleon affected an indifference he did not feel, since he himself had called for his genealogy from Tuscany (Bourienne). Precisely because Bonaparte's birth lacks any connection with divinity, that birth is wonderful: 'I saw,' says Demosthenes, '*that Philip against whom we fought for the freedom of Greece and the salvation of its Republics, his eye cut out, his collarbone fractured, his hand and leg mutilated, offering up all his limbs to the blows of fate with unchangeable resolution, satisfied if he might live with honor, and crown himself with the palms of victory.*'

Now, Philip was Alexander's father; Alexander was then the son of a king and a king worthy of the title; because of those twin realities, he commanded obedience. Alexander, born to the throne, had not, as Bonaparte had, a lesser life to live, before achieving the greater one. Alexander offers no disparities in his career; his teacher is Aristotle; taming Bucephalus is one of his childhood pastimes. Napoleon has only an ordinary schoolteacher to instruct him; chargers are not available to him; he is the least wealthy of his college companions. This artillery sub-lieutenant, lacking servants, nevertheless obliged Europe to acknowledge him not long ago; this little corporal summoned the greatest sovereigns of Europe to his antechambers:

*'Are our two kings not yet here? Tell them then  
They are over-late, that Attila tires of them.'*

Napoleon, who cried out so feelingly: '*Oh, if only I were my grandson!*' did not inherit family power, he created it: what diverse abilities does not this creation suppose! Would you have Napoleon be merely the wielder of an intellect that unusual events, and extraordinary danger, have developed? That supposition would make him no less astonishing: indeed, what would a man be who was capable of directing and appropriating so many unusual superiorities?

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 3

The Corsican branch of the Bonapartes specifically

However, if Napoleon was no prince, he was, as the old expression has it, the son of a family. Monsieur de Marbeuf, Governor of the Island of Corsica, obtained Napoleon's admission to a school in Autun; he was later enrolled in the college at Brienne. Élisa, Madame Bacciochi, received her education at Saint-Cyr: Bonaparte reclaimed his sister when the Revolution closed the doors on those religious retreats. Thus one finds a sister of Napoleon as one of the last pupils of an institution where Louis XIV heard its first young ladies chanting the choruses of Racine.

The proofs of nobility required for Napoleon's admission to a military school were prepared: they contained the baptismal certificate of Carlo Bonaparte, Napoleon's father, from which Carlo one can go back to Francesco, ten generations earlier; a certificate from the principal nobles of the town of Ajaccio, proving that the Bonaparte family had always been numbered among the oldest and noblest; a certificate of recognition that the Bonaparte family of Tuscany enjoyed patrician rank, and declaring that its origin was one with that of the Bonaparte family of Corsica, etc., etc.

*'On Bonaparte's entering Treviso,' says Monsieur Las Cases, 'they told him that his family had been powerful there; at Bologna, that they had been inscribed in the golden book...At their meeting in Dresden, the Emperor Francis told the Emperor Napoleon that his family had been monarchs in Treviso, and that he had been shown the documents regarding the matter: he added that to have been a monarch was beyond price, and that he must tell Marie-Louise, to whom it would bring great pleasure.'*

Born of a race of gentlemen, which forged alliances with the Orsini, the Lomelli, and the Medici, not for a moment was Napoleon, who had been attacked by the revolution, a democrat; that is clear from all he said and wrote: ruled by his blood his leanings were towards aristocracy. Pasquale Paoli was not Napoleon's godfather as he claimed: it was the obscure Laurent Giubega de Calvi; one learns this particular from the registry entry for the baptism, carried out at Ajaccio by the cathedral bursar, the priest Diamante.

I am afraid of compromising Napoleon in setting him among the ranks of the aristocracy. Cromwell, in his speech to Parliament on the 12th of September 1654, declared he was born a gentleman; Mirabeau, La Fayette, Desaix and a hundred other partisans of the Revolution were also noblemen. The English have claimed that Emperor's first name was Nicholas, from which in derision they call him Nick. That fine name Napoleon came to him from one of his uncles who married his daughter to an Ornano. Saint Napoleon was a Greek martyr. According to the commentators on Dante, Count Orso was the son of Napoleone da Cerbaia. No one in the past, in reading history, was struck by that name which several Cardinals bore; now it seems striking. A man's fame does not flow backwards; it flows onwards. The Nile at its source is only known to some Ethiopian; at its mouth, what nation does not know of it?

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 4

#### Bonaparte's birth and childhood

It remains attested that Bonaparte's real name was Buonaparte; he signed his name in that way himself throughout his Italian campaign, and until he was thirty-three. He then *Frenchified* it, and only signed as Bonaparte: I will leave him with that name which he gave himself and which he has engraved at the foot of his indestructible statue. (That name, Buonaparte, was sometimes written without the u: the bursar of Ajaccio cathedral who signed the register at Napoleon's baptism wrote Bonaparte three times without using the Italian vowel u.)

Did Bonaparte take a year from his age in order to declare himself French, that is to say, in order for his birth to have taken place after the date of the union of Corsica with France? That question is treated in a brief but thorough and substantial manner by Monsieur Eckard: one can read his pamphlet. The result of it is that Bonaparte was born on the 5th of February 1768 and not the 15th of August 1769, despite Monsieur Bourienne's positive assertion. That is why the Senate official, in his proclamation of the 3rd of April 1814, treats Napoleon as a *foreigner*.

The act celebrating the marriage of Bonaparte with Marie-Josèphe-Rose de Tascher, inscribed in the civic register of the second arrondissement of Paris, on the 19th Ventôse Year IV (9th March 1796), attests that Napoléon Buonaparte was born at Ajaccio on the 5th of February 1768, and that his birth certificate, stamped by the civic official, certifies as to the date. That same date accords exactly with what the marriage certificate affirms; that the bridegroom was 28 years old.

Napoleon's birth certificate, presented at the town hall of the second arrondissement on the celebration of his marriage to Josephine, was removed by one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp at the start of 1810, when proceedings were in hand to annul Napoleon's marriage to Josephine. Monsieur Duclos, not daring to refuse an Imperial order, wrote at the time on one of the sheets of Napoleon's *dossier*: '*His birth certificate has been sent to him, on my being unable, at the moment of his request, to deliver a copy to him.*' The date of Josephine's birth is altered on the marriage certificate, scratched out then overwritten, though one can make out the lines of the original with a magnifying glass. The Empress shed four years: the pleasantries offered on this subject at the Tuileries and at St. Helena are mean and spiteful.

Bonaparte's birth certificate, removed by the aide-de-camp in 1810, has vanished; all attempts to find it have proved unfruitful.

These are the irrefutable facts, and I too think, based on these facts, that Napoleon was born at Ajaccio on the 5th of February 1768. However I do not delude myself as to the historical difficulties which appear if that date is adopted.

Joseph, Bonaparte's elder brother, was born on the 5th of January 1768; his younger brother, Napoleon, could not have been born in the same year, unless the date of Joseph's birth was similarly adjusted: that is possible, since all the official certificates of Napoleon and Josephine are suspected of being flawed. Notwithstanding a valid suspicion of fraud, the Comte de Beaumont, sub-prefect of Calvi, in his

*Observations on Corsica*, attests that the civic register of Ajaccio notes Napoleon's birth as the 15th of August 1769. Finally, documents Monsieur Libri has lent me demonstrate that Bonaparte himself considered he had been born on the 15th of August 1769, at a time when he could have had no reason to wish himself younger. But the official date on the marriage papers from his first marriage and the suppression of his birth certificate remain.

Be that as it may, Bonaparte would stand to gain nothing from this alteration to his life-story: if you fix his birth on the 15th of August 1769, you are forced to place his conception around the 15th of November 1768; now, Corsica only yielded to France after the treaty of the 15th of May 1768; and the last submissions of the *pieves* (the cantons of Corsica) were only effected on the 14th of June 1769. According to the most generous calculations, Napoleon would not be French until some hours of darkness had passed in his mother's womb. Well, if he was the citizen of a somewhat doubtful country, it sets his nature apart: a being descended from above, worthy of belonging to all times and all countries.

However, Bonaparte did have leanings towards Italy; he detested the French until the time when their bravery granted him an empire. The evidence of this aversion is everywhere in his youthful writings. In a note which Napoleon wrote on suicide, one finds this passage: *'My compatriots, loaded with chains, tremble as they shake the hand which oppresses them...Frenchmen, not content with having stolen everything we cherish, you have even corrupted our morals.'*

A letter written to Paoli in England, in 1789, which has been made public, begins like this:

*'General,*  
*I was born as our country was lost. Thirty thousand Frenchmen spewed onto our shores, drowning the throne of liberty in waves of blood: such was the odious sight that first struck my eyes.'*

Another letter from Napoleon to Monsieur Gubica, chief clerk to the State of Corsica, reads:

*'While France is reborn, what will become of the rest of us, Corsican wretches? Forever base, will we continue to kiss the insolent hand that oppresses us? Will we continue to see all the roles, that natural right destined us for, occupied by foreigners as despicable in their morals and their conduct as their birth is abject?'*

Finally the rough draft of a third letter of Bonaparte's, in manuscript form, regarding the recognition by Corsica of the National Assembly of 1789, begins thus:

*'Gentlemen,*  
*It was by bloodshed that the French became our rulers; it was by bloodshed that they secured their conquest. The soldier, the lawyer, the banker, united to oppress us, despise us, and force us to swallow deep draughts from the cup of ignominy. We have suffered their vexation long enough; but since we have lacked the courage to free ourselves from them, let us ignore them forever; let them be treated again with the contempt they deserve, or at least let them aspire to other nations' trust in their country; it is certain that will never obtain it from ours.'*



Napoleon's prejudices against his mother-land never vanished entirely: once crowned, he appeared to neglect us; he only spoke of himself, his empire, his soldiers, hardly ever of the French; this phrase escaped his lips: '*You, the French.*'

The Emperor, in his papers from St. Helena, tells how his mother, surprised by the birth-pangs, had let him fall from the womb onto a carpet patterned with large leaves, depicting the heroes of the *Iliad*: he would not have been any the less who he was if he had fallen onto straw.

I have spoken of the documents which have been discovered; when I was Ambassador in Rome in 1828, Cardinal Fesch, while showing me his pictures and books, told me he possessed manuscripts belonging to the young Napoleon; he attached so little importance to them that he proposed to show me them; I left Rome, and lacked the opportunity to consult these documents. After the death of Madame Mère and Cardinal Fesch, various items belonging to the estate were dispersed; the box containing Napoleon's *Essais* was taken to Lyons with several others; it fell into the hands of Monsieur Libri. Monsieur Libri inserted an article itemizing Cardinal Fesch's papers in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of the 1st of March that year, 1842; he has since kindly chosen to send me the box. I have profited from the communication by adding to the previous text of my *Memoirs* concerning Napoleon all the reservations derived from more ample information, from contradictory statements, and from various objections arising.

BOOK XIX  
CHAPTER 5  
Bonaparte's Corsica

Benson, in his *Sketches of Corsica*, speaks of the country house which Bonaparte's family occupied:

*'Going along the sea-shore from Ajaccio towards the Isle Sanguiniere, about a mile from the town, occur two stone pillars, the remains of a doorway, leading up to a dilapidated villa, once the residence of Madame Bonaparte's half-brother on the mother's side, whom Napoleon created Cardinal Fesch.... The remains of a small summer-house are visible beneath the rock, the entrance to which is nearly closed by a luxuriant fig-tree. This was Bonaparte's frequent retreat, when the vacations of the school at which he studied permitted him to visit home.'*

Love of his native land accompanied Napoleon on his everyday walks. Bonaparte, in 1788, wrote, a propos of Monsieur de Sussy, that *Corsica offers a perpetual springtime*; he no longer spoke of his island when he was happy; he even had an antipathy towards it; it recalled too narrow a cradle. But at St Helena his homeland was recalled to memory: *'Corsica held a thousand charms for Napoleon, it explained his finest traits, the bold vessel that was his physical make-up. Everything was better there, he would say; there was nothing like the smell of its soil even: that was enough for him to distinguish the place with his eyes closed; he had seen no part of it again. He saw himself there in his childhood, among his first loves; he found himself there in youth among a thousand precipices, travelling the high summits, the deep valleys.'*

Napoleon found romance in his cradle; that romance began with Vannina, executed by her husband Sampietro. Baron Neuhof, that is King Theodore, had visited every shore, demanding help from England, the Pope, the Grand Turk, and the Bey of Tunis, after having been crowned King of the Corsicans, who did not know whom to give themselves to: Voltaire laughed at it all. The two Paoli, Giacinto and above all Pasquale, had filled Europe with the sound of their names. Buttafuoco begged Rousseau to act as legislator for Corsica; the philosopher from Geneva thought of establishing himself in the country of one who, in troubling the Alps, took Geneva under his wing. *'There is still one country in Europe,'* wrote Rousseau, *'capable of legislation: that is the island of Corsica. The courage and constancy with which this brave people has regained and defended its liberty well merits a wise man teaching them how to preserve it. I have a presentiment that one day that little island will astonish Europe.'*

Brought up in Corsican society, Bonaparte was raised in that primary school for revolutionaries; he brings us on his debut neither the calm nor the feelings of youth, but a spirit already stamped with political passion. That alters the conception one has of Napoleon.

When a man becomes famous, antecedents are invented for him: predestined children, according to the biographers, are fiery, loud, and untamable; they learn everything, or nothing; more often than not they are also gloomy children, who do not take part in their companions' games, who dream in solitude and are already haunted by the threat of fame. Behold how some enthusiast has dug up the exceedingly ordinary letters (Italian ones for sure) from Napoleon to his grand-parents; we are forced to swallow these puerile inanities. Prophecies of future characteristics are in vain; we are what circumstances make us; let a child

be happy or sad, silent or noisy, let him show or not show an aptitude for work, no oracle has inspired him. Halt the development of a schoolboy at sixteen; let him be as intelligent as you choose to make him, that infant prodigy, frozen in adolescence, will remain an idiot; the child lacks even the loveliest of the graces, a smile: he laughs, and fails to smile.

Napoleon then was a little boy neither more or less distinguished than his peers: '*I was merely,*' he declares, '*an obstinate and curious child.*' He liked buttercups and ate cherries with Mademoiselle du Colombier. When he left home, he only knew Italian. His ignorance of the language of Turenne was almost total; like the German Marshal Saxe, Bonaparte, the Italian, could not spell a single word correctly; Henri IV, Louis XIV and Marshal Richelieu, less excusably, were hardly any better. It was obviously to conceal the deficiencies of his education that Napoleon rendered his signature indecipherable. Leaving Corsica at the age of nine, he did not see the island again until eight years later. At the college in Brienne, there was nothing extraordinary about him, either in his manner of studying, or in his appearance. His comrades made jokes about his name Napoleon and his country; he said to his friend Bourrienne: '*I will do you Frenchmen all the harm I can.*' In a report to the king in 1784, Monsieur de Kéralio affirmed that *the young Bonaparte would make an excellent sailor*; the phrase is suspect, since his report was only discovered when Napoleon was inspecting the flotilla at Boulogne.

Leaving Brienne on the 14th of October 1784, Bonaparte went to the École Militaire in Paris. The civil list paid his board and lodgings; he was distressed at receiving a grant. That payment to him was continued, witness this sample receipt found in Fesch's box (Monsieur Libri's box).

*'I the undersigned acknowledge receipt from Monsieur Biercourt of the sum of 200 provided from the grant which the king afforded me from the funds of the Military College in my position as a former cadet of the college in Paris.'*

Mademoiselle de Comnène (Madame d'Abrantès), residing in turn, with her mother, at Montpellier, Toulouse and Paris, lost no opportunity of seeing her compatriot Bonaparte: '*When I pass the Quai de Conti these days,*' she wrote, '*I cannot prevent myself glancing at the upper room, on the left side of the house, on the third storey; that is where Napoleon stayed, each time he came to my parent's home.*'

Bonaparte was not liked at his new college: morose and rebellious, he failed to please his masters; he criticized everything indiscriminately. He addressed a note to the vice-principal on the shortcomings of the education he was receiving. '*Would it not be better to force them (the students) to be self-sufficient, that is to say, instead of their fiddly cooking which they could do without, make them eat military rations or something approaching them, to accustom them to scavenge, brush their clothes, clean their boots and shoes?*' That is what he later demanded at Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain.

Having snubbed the college, he relieved it of his presence, being named as sub-lieutenant of artillery in the Regiment de La Fère.

Napoleon's literary career extended from 1784 to 1793: a short space of time, but lengthy in terms of effort. Wandering, with the artillery corps to which he belonged, to Auxonne, Dôle, Seurres, and Lyons, Bonaparte was attracted to famous places like a bird drawn to a mirror or lured by a decoy. Alert to academic questions, he would respond to them; he addressed himself confidently to powerful people he

did not know: he made himself the equal of everyone before becoming their master. Sometimes he would write under an assumed name; sometimes he would sign his own name which made no difference to his anonymity. He wrote to the Abbé Raynal, and to Monsieur Necker; he sent notes to the Ministry on the management of Corsica, on projects for the defence of Saint-Florent, Mortella Point, and the Gulf of Ajaccio, on the manner of placing canon when firing shells. He was listened to as little as Mirabeau was listened to when he drafted projects in Berlin regarding Prussia and Holland. He studied geography. It has been remarked that in speaking of St Helena he indicated it by these words alone: 'A little island'. He was interested in China, the Indies, and the Arabs. He labored over the historians, philosophers, economists, Herodotus, Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, Filangieri, Mably, Smith; he refuted the Discourse on the origin and fundamental principles of the equality of *men* and wrote: 'I do not believe in it; I do not believe in it at all.' Lucien Bonaparte relates that he, Lucien, had made two copies of a history that Napoleon had sketched out. Part of the manuscript original of the sketch was discovered in Cardinal Fesch's box: his research is not very interesting, the style is commonplace, and the story of Vannina is re-told ineffectually. Sampietro's words to the great nobles of Henri II's court after his execution of Vannina are worth all Napoleon's narrative: 'What do the problems of Sampietro and his wife matter to the King of France!'

At the start of his career Bonaparte had not the slightest presentiment of his future; it was only when he attained rank that he had the idea of climbing higher: but if he did not aspire to raise himself, he had no wish to descend; one could not tear him from the place he had once reached. Three manuscript notebooks (Fesch's box) are dedicated to research regarding the Sorbonne, and Gallican liberty; there is correspondence with Paoli, Salicetti, and especially with Père Dupuis, a Minim, Vice-principal of Brienne College, a man of religion and good sense who counselled his young pupil and called Napoleon his *dear friend*.

Bonaparte mixed imaginative pages among these thankless tasks; he spoke of women; he wrote *Le Masque prophète*, *Le Roman corse*, and an English novel, *The Earl of Essex*; he writes dialogues about love which he treats with scorn, and yet he addresses a passionate letter in draft to an unknown beloved; he takes little account of glory, placing love of country alone in the first rank, and that country was Corsica.

In Geneva, anyone can see a request he made of a bookseller: the romantic sub-lieutenant enquired about the Memoirs of Madame de Warens. Napoleon was also a poet, as were Caesar and Frederick: he preferred Ariosto's works to Tasso's; he found portraits of his future generals there, and a horse ready bridled for his journey to the stars. The following madrigal addressed to Madame Saint-Huberty playing the role of Dido, is attributed to Bonaparte; the content may have been the Emperor's, the form is from a more skillful hand than his:

*'Romans, who pride yourself on your fair origin,  
See what your Empire's birth depended on!  
Dido has no attraction half as strong  
With which to stop her lover taking wing.  
But if that other Dido, who graced this haven,  
Had been true queen of Carthage,  
He, to serve her, his gods would have forsaken,*

*And left your land fit only for the savage.'*

Around this time Bonaparte seems to have been tempted towards suicide. A thousand fledglings are obsessed with the idea of suicide, which they consider proof of their superiority. This manuscript note appears among those papers sent on by Monsieur Libri: *'Always alone among a crowd of men, I return home to dream by myself, and deliver myself to all the power of melancholy. In which direction does it wander today? Towards death...If I was sixty, I would respect the prejudices of my contemporaries, and I would wait patiently for nature to take her course; but since I begin to feel distress, so that nothing delights me, why should I endure these days where nothing goes well for me?'*

These are the reveries of all Romantics. The beginning and end of such ideas is found in Rousseau, whose text Bonaparte will alter with several phrases of his own.

Here is an essay of another kind; I reproduce it letter for letter: education and blood ought not to make princes too disdainful of it: let them recall their eagerness to wait in line for a man who has chased them at will from the ante-chambers of kings.

*'PHRASES, CERTIFICATS AND OTHER ESSENCIAL THINGS  
RELATIVE TO MY CURRENT POSITION.*

*Manner of requesting leave.*

*When one is in mid-semester and wants to obtain summer leave because of illness, there is a certificate to be drawn up by a doctor in town and a surgeon, that before the period you designate, your illness does not allow you to rejoin the garrison. You will observe that this certificate is to be on stamped paper, it must be stamped by the judge and commandant of the place. Then you will draw up your memoir to the Minister of War in the manner and phrases as follows:*

*Ajaccio, the 21st April 1787.*

*'MEMOIR REQUESTING LEAVE.*

*ROYAL CORPS  
of artillery*

*Monsieur Napoleon de  
Buonaparte, second-lieutenant,  
Regiment, La Fère, artillery*

*REGIMENT*

*Request, of Monseigneur le maréchal de Ségur, to be  
so kind as to grant him leave for five and a half months  
from the 16th of May next which he requires to resttore  
his health in accord with the certificate of the doctor and  
surgeon enclosed. In view of my limited means and the  
cost of treatment, I ask that paid leave may be granted  
me.*

*Buonaparte'*

*Send all this to the colonel of the regiment, Monsieur de Lance whom one can write to care of Monsieur Sauquier,  
Military Paymaster-General at Court, addressed to the Minister or the Paymaster-General.'*

What a detailed way of teaching oneself how to make mistakes! One visualizes the Emperor laboring to legitimize the seizure of kingdoms, his office cluttered with illegal paperwork.

The young Napoleon's style is declamatory; the only thing worthy of note is the energy of a pioneer shifting sand. The sight of these precious works recalls my juvenile hotchpotch, my *Essais historiques*, my manuscript of *Les Natchez*, four thousand pages in folio, fastened together with string; but I did not draw the *little houses*, *childish sketches*, and *schoolboy scribbles*, in the margin, that one sees in the margins of Bonaparte's rough papers; among my juvenilities there was no *stone ball* that may have served as the model for a prototype cannonball.

Such then is my introduction to the Emperor's life; the concept of Bonaparte arrived in the world before he did himself: it troubled the earth, secretly; in 1789, one felt, at the moment when Bonaparte appeared, something formidable, a disquiet one could not account for. When the globe is threatened by some catastrophe, one is warned of it by underlying disturbances; one is afraid; one lies awake listening during the night; one gazes at the sky without knowing why one does so, or what may happen.

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 6

#### Paoli

Paoli was recalled from England by a proposal of Mirabeau's, in 1789. He was presented to Louis XVI by the Marquis de La Fayette, and appointed as lieutenant-general and military commander of Corsica. Did Bonaparte support the exile whose protégé he had been, and with whom he corresponded? One presumes so. He did not delay in involving himself with Paoli: the crimes perpetrated in our first wave of troubles dampened the old general's ardor; he handed Corsica to the English, in order to escape the Convention. Bonaparte joined a Jacobin club in Ajaccio; a hostile club was formed, and Napoleon was obliged to flee. Madame Letizia and her daughters took refuge in a Greek colony at Carghese, from where she gained Marseille. Joseph was married there, on the 1st of August 1794, to Mademoiselle Clary, the daughter of a rich merchant. In 1791, the Minister of War relieved Napoleon of his duties for a while, on his return to Corsica.

We find Bonaparte in Paris again, with Bourrienne, in 1792. Lacking financial resources, he became a speculator: he proposed to rent out houses being constructed in the Rue Montholon, with the design of sub-letting them. During this period the Revolution was in train; the 20th of June rang out. Bonaparte leaving, with Bourrienne, a restaurant on the Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Palais-Royal, saw five or six thousand ragged individuals shouting as they marched towards the Tuileries; he said to Bourrienne: '*Let's follow those beggars*'; and he went off to take up position on the riverside terrace. When the king, whose residence had been invaded, appeared at one of the windows, decked out with a red cap, Bonaparte cried indignantly: '*Che coglione! Why have they let that scoundrel in? They should have swept four or five hundred away with cannon fire, and the rest would be running yet.*'

You know that on the 20th of June 1792, I was not far from Napoleon: I was walking at Montmorency, where Barère and Maret were seeking solitude, as I was, but for a different reason. Is that the period when Bonaparte was obliged to sell and negotiate little assignats called Corcets? After the death of a wine-seller from the Rue Saint-Avoy, in an inventory drawn up by Dumay, a solicitor, and Chariot, an auctioneer, Bonaparte appears to the tune of a fifteen franc debt for rent, which he could not pay: this poverty increases his greatness. Napoleon said, on St Helena: '*At the sound of the assault on the Tuileries, on the 10th of August, I ran to the Carrousel, to the house of Fauvelet, Bourrienne's brother, who kept a furniture shop.*' Bourrienne's brother had a speculation going which he called a *national auction*; Bonaparte had pledged his watch to it; a dangerous precedent: how many poor students consider themselves Napoleons because they have pawned their watch!

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 7

#### Two pamphlets

Bonaparte returned to the south of France on '*the 2nd of January Year II*'; he found himself there just before the siege of Toulon; he wrote two pamphlets there: the first is in letter-form to Matteo Buttafuoco; he treats him with indignation and at the same time condemns Paoli for having given power back into the hands of the people: '*A strange mistake,*' he cries, '*that subjects the only man who by his education, the illustriousness of his birth, and his wealth, is fit to be governor, to a brute, a mercenary!*'

Though a revolutionary, Bonaparte everywhere reveals himself as an enemy of the people; he was nevertheless complimented on his pamphlet by Masseria, the President of the Patriotic Club of Ajaccio.

On the 29th of July 1793, he had another pamphlet printed, *Le Souper de Beaucaire*. Bourrienne reproduces a manuscript reviewed by Bonaparte, but abridged and modified to be more in accord with the Emperor's opinions at the time when he read the work again: it is a dialogue between a man from Marseilles, one from Nîmes, an army officer, and a Montpellier manufacturer. It is about a current affair of the time, the attack on Avignon by Carteaux's army, in which Napoleon was involved as an artillery officer. He announces to the *Marseillais* that his party will be defeated, since it has ceased to hold fast to the Revolution. The *Marseillais* says to the officer, that is to say, to Bonaparte: '*One always remembers that monster who was nevertheless one of the leaders of the club; he hung a citizen from a lantern, pillaged his house and violated his wife, having made her drink a glass of her husband's blood.*' – '*How terrible,*' the officer cries; '*but is this story true! I doubt it, since no one believes in rape these days.*' It is the frivolousness of last century coming to fruition in Bonaparte's icy temperament. That accusation of having drunk blood or forced it to be drunk has often been repeated. When the Duc de Montmorency was beheaded at Toulouse, armed men drank his blood in order to acquire the virtue of a great heart.



## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 8

#### A Captain's brevet

We arrive at the siege of Toulon: here begins Bonaparte's military career. Given Napoleon's rank in the artillery at that time, Cardinal Fesch's box contains a curious document: it is an artillery captain's brevet granted to Napoleon by Louis XVI on the 30th of August 1792, twenty days after the actual dethronement, which took place on the 10th of August. The king had been incarcerated in the Temple on the 13th, two days after the massacre of the Swiss Guard. In this brevet it is stated that the nomination on the 30th of August 1792 will count as if the officer had been promoted on the preceding 16th of February. The ill-fated are often prophets; but this time the martyr's prevision was not without reason as regards Napoleon's future glory. In the War Office records there still exist various blank brevets, signed by Louis XVI in advance; they only await the filling-in of the empty spaces; the hastily granted commission will have come from this pile. Louis XVI, imprisoned in the Temple, on the eve of his trial, in the midst of his captive family, had other things to worry about than the promotion of some unknown.

The timing of the brevet is fixed by the counter-signature; this counter-signature is: Servan. Servan, appointed to the Ministry of War on the 8th of May 1792, was dismissed on the 13th of June of the same year; Dumouriez held the portfolio until the 18th; Lajard occupied the Ministry in turn until the 23rd of July; D'Abancourt succeeded him until the 10th of August, at which the National Assembly recalled Servan, who gave in his resignation on the 3rd of October. Our Ministers were as hard to count in those days as our victories were later.

Napoleon's brevet cannot be dated to Servan's first ministry, since the document carries the date of 30th of August 1792; it must be from his second ministry; however there is a letter of Lajard's, from the 12th of July, addressed to *Artillery Captain Bonaparte*. Explain that if you can. Did Bonaparte acquire the document in question due to a corrupt official, the disorder at the time, or Revolutionary brotherhood? What patron furthered this Corsican's affairs? That patron was the Eternal Lord; France, under divine compulsion, herself delivered the brevet to the first captain of earthly things; that brevet was authorized with the signature of Louis, who lost his head on condition that it would be replaced by that of Napoleon: the work of Providence before whom one can only raise one's hands to heaven.

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 9

#### Toulon

Toulon had recognized Louis XVII and opened its harbors to the English fleet. Carteaux on one flank, and General Lapoye on the other, approached Toulon on the orders of Representatives Fréron, Barras, Ricord and Saliceti. Napoleon, who had chanced to serve under Carteaux at Avignon, called to a military council, maintained that it was essential to seize Fort *Mulgrave*, constructed by the English on *Caire* hill, and to set up batteries on the two promontories of L'Éguillette and Balaguier which, firing on the larger and smaller harbor, would compel the enemy to abandon them. All turned out as Napoleon had predicted: a first view was to be had of his destiny.

Madame Bourrienne has added a few notes to her husband's *Memoirs*; I will cite a passage from them which shows Bonaparte before Toulon:

*'I remarked,' she says, 'that at this time (1795, in Paris), his manner was cold and often sombre; his smile was hypocritical and often misplaced; and, regarding that comment, I recall that at that time, a few days after our return, he had one of those moments of savage hilarity which upset me, and which disposed me to dislike him. He was telling us, with an exalted gaiety, that being before Toulon, where he controlled the artillery, one of the officers who happened to be under his command was visited by his wife, to whom he had not long been married, and whom he tenderly loved. A few days afterwards, Bonaparte ordered another attack on the town, in which this officer was to be engaged. His wife came to General Bonaparte, and with tears entreated him to dispense with her husband's services that day. The General was inexorable, as he himself told us with a sort of savage and exalted gaiety. The moment for the attack arrived, and this officer, though he had always shown himself to be a very brave man, as Bonaparte himself assured us, felt a presentiment of his approaching death; he turned pale, he trembled. He was stationed beside the General, and during an interval when the firing from the town was very heavy, Bonaparte called out to him, 'Take care! There is a shell coming!' The officer, he added, instead of moving to one side, stooped down, and was literally cut in two. Bonaparte laughed loudly while describing in detail the parts of him which were blown away.'*

Toulon re-taken, the scaffolds were erected; eight hundred victims were brought to the Champs de Mars; they were gunned down. The commissioners advanced, shouting: *'Those who are not dead stand up; the Republic shows them mercy'*, and those wounded who rose to their feet were then massacred. The scene was so fine that it was presented on stage at Lyons after the siege.

*'What think you? Perhaps some guilty one  
has yet escaped the first sharp lightning bolt:  
Announce a pardon, and if, fooled by hope,  
some quivering wretch rises once again,  
let the flames redouble, let the fire reclaim.'*

(Abbé DELILLE.)

Did Bonaparte order the executions in person in his role as artillery commander? A feeling of humanity would not have stopped him, though he was not cruel by nature.

This note to the commissioners of the Convention is extant: *‘Citizen Representatives, from the field of glory, treading in the blood of traitors, I announce to you with joy that your orders have been executed and France is avenged: neither their age nor sex has saved them. Those who were only wounded by the Republican cannon have been dispatched by the sword of liberty and the bayonet of quality. Greetings and respects,*

*BRUTUS BUONAPARTE, citizen sans-culotte.*’

This letter was printed for the first time, I think, in *La Semaine*, the news sheet published by Malte-Brun. The Vicomtesse de Fars (pseudonym) gives it in her *Memoirs on the French Revolution*; she adds that the note was written on the casing of a drum; Fabry reprints it, in an article on Bonaparte, in *Biographies of Living Men*; Royou, in his *History of France*, declares that no one knows which mouth uttered the fatal command; Fabry, already cited, says, in *Les Missionnaires de 93*, that some attribute the order to Fréron, others to Bonaparte. The executions on the Champ de Mars in Toulon are described by Fréron in a letter to Moïse Bayle of the Convention, and by Moltedo and Barras to the Committee of Public Safety.

Who in fact was responsible for the first bulletin of Napoleon’s victories? Was it Napoleon or his brother? Lucien, abhorring his mistakes, confesses, in his *Memoirs*, that he had at first been an ardent Republican. Appointed as head of the Revolutionary Committee at Saint-Maximin in Provence, ‘we sent no end of words and speeches,’ he says, ‘to the Jacobins in Paris. As it was the fashion to employ classical names, my former monk adopted, I believe, that of Epaminondas, and I that of Brutus. A pamphlet has attributed this borrowing of Brutus’ name to Napoleon, but it belonged to me alone. Napoleon sought to elevate his own name above those of ancient history, and if he had wanted to take part in these masquerades, I do not think he would have chosen that of Brutus.’

There is courage in this confession. Bonaparte, in the *Memorial of St Helena*, maintains a profound silence regarding this part of his life. That silence, according to Madame La Duchesse d’Abrantès, is explained by something improper in his situation: ‘Bonaparte was more visible,’ she says, ‘than Lucien, and though he has since often sought to substitute Lucien for himself, at that time there could be no mistake about it. “The Memorial of St Helena,” he must have thought, “will be read by a hundred million people, among whom one might count perhaps scarcely a thousand who know the facts that trouble me. Those thousand individuals will preserve the memory of those facts, in a manner unlikely to disturb anyone, by oral tradition: the Memorial will thus become irrefutable.”’

So, serious doubts remain concerning the note which Lucien or Napoleon signed: how could Lucien, not being a representative of the Convention, arrogate to himself the right to give a report of the massacre? Was he deputed by the commune of Saint-Maximin to take part in the carnage? And why would he have taken upon himself the responsibility of recording it, when there were those *greater* than him at play in the amphitheater, and witnesses to the execution carried out by his brother? It costs something to lower one’s gaze so far having raised it so high.

Let us concede that the narrator of Napoleon's exploits was Lucien, President of the Committee of Saint-Maximin: it will remain eternally true that one of Bonaparte's first bursts of cannon fire was fired against the French; it is at least certain that Napoleon was further called on to shed their blood on the 13th Vendémiaire [5th October 1795]; he again reddened his hands on the death of the Duc d'Enghien. On the first occasion, those immolations ought to have revealed Bonaparte; the second hecatomb carried him to the rank which made him master of Italy; and the third eased his entry into empire.

He has grown greater on our flesh; he has split open our bones, and fed himself on the marrow of lions. It is a deplorable thing, but it needs to be recognized, if one does not wish to be ignorant of the mysteries of human nature and the character of the age: a part of Napoleon's power came from being drenched by the Terror. The Revolution is content to serve those who have traversed its crimes; an origin in innocence is an obstacle.

The younger Robespierre was seized with affection for Bonaparte and wanted to summon him to command Paris in place of Hanriot. Napoleon's family were established in the Chateau de Sallé, near Antibes. *'I went there from Saint-Maximin'* says Lucien, *'to spend a few days with my family and my brother. We were all together again, and the General gave us all the time he could. He came there one day, more preoccupied than usual and, walking between Joseph and myself, announced that it was up to him whether he left for Paris next day, with a view to establishing us all there to our advantage. Speaking for myself this news delighted me: to reach the capital at last seemed to me a piece of good news nothing could offset. "They are offering me, Hanriot's place," Napoleon told us. "I must give my reply tonight. Well! What do you say to it?" We hesitated a moment. "Oh!" the General resumed, "It's well worth the trouble of thinking about: it's nothing to be enthusiastic about; it is not as easy to save one's head in Paris as at Saint-Maximin. – Young Robespierre is honest, but his brother is no joke. I would have to serve him. – Me: support that man! No, never! I know how useful I would be to him in replacing his imbecile of a commander in Paris; but it is not what I want to do. It is not my time yet. Today there is no place of honor for me in the army: be patient, I will command Paris later."* Such were Napoleon's words. Then he expressed to us his indignation at the Reign of Terror, whose imminent end he announced to us, and finished by repeating several times, half serious and half smilingly: *"What would I do in that galley?"*

After the siege of Toulon, Bonaparte found himself involved in the maneuvers of our Army of the Alps. He received an order to go to Genoa: secret instructions commanded him to reconnoiter the state of the fortress at Savona, and to gather information on the intentions of the Genoese government regarding the coalition. These instructions, delivered at Loano on the 23rd Messidor Year II of the Republic, are signed Ricord.

Bonaparte fulfilled his mission. The 9th Thermidor arrived: the terrorist deputies were replaced by Albitte, Saliceti and Laporte. Suddenly they announced, in the name of the French people, that General Bonaparte, commanding the artillery of the Army of Italy, had totally lost their confidence due to the most suspicious conduct, above all by the journey he had lately made to Genoa.

The warrant from Barcelonnette, dated 19th Thermidor Year II of the French Republic, one, indivisible, and democratic (6th of August, 1794), reads: *'that Bonaparte shall be placed under arrest and conveyed to the Committee of Public Safety in Paris, under strong and secure guard'*. Saliceti examined

Bonaparte's papers; he replied to those who interested themselves in the detainee that it was necessary to act with rigor after an accusation of espionage by Nice and Corsica. That accusation was in consequence of secret instructions issued by Ricord: it was easy to insinuate that, instead of serving France, Napoleon had served the enemy. The Emperor made great use of espionage accusations; he should have remembered the dangers which equivalent accusations had exposed him to himself.

Napoleon, struggling, said to the representatives: *'Saliceti, you know me...Albitte, you do not know me at all; but you do know with what cunning slander can hiss. Listen to me; restore the patriots' esteem; one hour afterwards, if the wretches wish my life.....I value it so little! I have risked it so often!'*

A decision to acquit him followed. Among the documents which at that time served to confirm Bonaparte's virtuous conduct, one should note a certificate endorsed by Pozzo di Borgo. Bonaparte was only set free provisionally; but in that interval he had time to imprison the world.

Saliceti, the accuser, did not hesitate to attach himself to the accused: but Bonaparte never trusted his old enemy. He wrote much later to General Dumas: *'Let him stay in Naples (Saliceti); he ought to be happy there. It's full of lazzaroni (idlers); I know him well: he has made them fear him; he is viler than they. Let him know I lack the power to defend the wretches who voted for the death of Louis XVI from public contempt and indignation.'*

Bonaparte, hastening to Paris, lodged in the Rue du Mail, the street where I halted after arriving from Brittany with Madame Rose. Bourrienne rejoined him, as did Murat, suspicious of terrorism and having abandoned his garrison at Abbeville. The government tried to send Napoleon to the Vendée as commander of an infantry brigade; he declined the honor, on the pretext that he did not wish to change corps. The Committee of Public Safety removed him, after his refusal, from the list of artillery officers on active service. One of the signatories to this de-registration was Cambacères, who became the second most important person in the Empire.

Embittered by these persecutions, Napoleon thought of emigrating; Volney dissuaded him. If he had executed that resolution, the fugitive court would have known nothing of him; there would moreover have been no crown for him to wear in that case: I would have had a vast comrade, a giant, stooping at my side during my exile.

Abandoning all ideas of emigration, Bonaparte turned his eyes to the Orient, doubly congenial to his nature because of its despotism and its splendor. He busied himself writing a note in order to offer his sword to the Sultan: inactivity and obscurity were mortal ills to him. *'It would be useful to my country'*, he wrote, *'if I could help the Turkish forces appear more formidable to Europe.'* The government did not reply to this missive from a madman, it seems.

Thwarted in these diverse projects, Bonaparte felt his misery increasing: it was difficult to help him; he accepted aid awkwardly, just as he suffered from having been promoted by royal generosity. He was annoyed with anyone who was more favored by fortune than he was: in the soul of that man for whom the wealth of nations would be poured out, one detects feelings of hatred that the communists and proletariat show today towards the rich. When one shares the sufferings of the poor, one experiences social inequality; one no sooner rides in a carriage than one shows scorn for the people on foot. Bonaparte had a

horror above all of the muscadins and the incroyables, young fashionable types at that time, whose hair was dressed in the mode of those who were guillotined: he liked to upset their complacency. He had meetings with Baptiste the Elder, and made the acquaintance of Talma. The Bonaparte family professed a taste for theatre: idleness when garrisoned often drew Napoleon to its spectacle.

Whatever efforts democracy may make to elevate morals by means of the great goals it sets itself, its practices lower morals; it has a lively resentment of such restraint: thinking to escape it, it poured out torrents of blood during the Revolution; a useless remedy, since it could not kill everyone, and, in the last analysis, it found itself faced by the brazenness of the dead. The necessity of living with petty restrictions makes life somewhat common; a rare thought is reduced to being expressed in a vulgar language, and genius is imprisoned in dialect, as, in the tired aristocracy, low feelings are couched in noble words. If one wishes to evoke a certain inferior side to Napoleon using examples taken from antiquity, one need only mention Agrippina's son; while the legions adored Octavia's husband, the Roman Empire shuddered at his memory!

In Paris, Bonaparte again met Mademoiselle du Comnène, who later married Junot, with whom Napoleon was friendly in the south.

*'At this period of his life,' says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, 'Napoleon was ugly. Since then he has totally changed. I am not talking about the halo of his glory's prestige: I mean the physical change merely which has taken place gradually in the space of seven years. Thus, all that was bony, jaundiced, and even sickly, is fleshed out, brighter, more attractive. Those features which were almost all points and angles have become fuller, because they have acquired some flesh where it was mostly lacking. His glance and smile were always admirable; his whole appearance too has undergone alteration. His hair, so remarkable to us now when we see prints of the passage of the bridge at Arcola, was quite usual then, because those same muscadins whom he so decried, wore it much longer still; but his color was so jaundiced at that time, and then he took so little care of himself, that his hair, badly combed, badly powdered, gave him an unattractive appearance. His small hands have also undergone metamorphosis; then they were thin, long and dark. On that point, as one is aware, he has become vain with just reason since those days. Ultimately, when I think of Napoleon, in 1795, entering the courtyard of the Hotel de la Tranquillité, in the Rue des Filles-Saint-Thomas, crossing it with awkward and uncertain steps, with a wretched round hat tipped over his eyes, allowing his two dog's-ears, badly powdered to fall over the collar of that steel-grey coat of his, which has since become a glorious banner, at least as well-known as Henri IV's panache of white feathers; without gloves, because, he said, they were an idle expense; wearing badly fitting, unpolished boots, and then all that sickly whole the result of his thinness, his jaundiced color; ultimately, when I invoke the memory of him at that time, and what I saw of him again later, I cannot recognize those two images as the same man.'*

BOOK XIX  
CHAPTER 10  
The Days of Vendémiaire

The death of Robespierre did not bring all to an end: the prisons only disgorged slowly; on the eve of the day when the dying tribune was carried to the scaffold, eighty victims were executed, so well-organized were their murders, so ordered and disciplined was the process of death! The two Sansons, the executioners, were put on trial; more happily for them than for Roseau, the executioner of Tardif, for the Duc de Mayenne, they were acquitted: the blood of Louis XVI had saved them.

The reprieved prisoners did not know what to do with their lives, the idle Jacobins how to spend their days; that prompted the balls and regrets of the Terror. It was only little by little that judicial authority was clawed back from the members of the Convention; they would not cease their criminal acts, for fear of losing power. The Revolutionary Tribunal was abolished.

André Dumont proposed that Robespierre's heirs should be hunted down; the Convention, urged on despite itself, reluctantly decreed, after a report by Saladin, that it was necessary to place Barère, Billaud de Varennes, and Collot d'Herbois, under arrest, the two latter being friends of Robespierre, who had nevertheless contributed to his fall. Carrier, Fouquier-Tinville, and Joseph Lebon, were tried; their crimes were revealed, notably the republican marriages and drowning of six hundred young people at Nantes. The Sections, among whom the National Guard happened to be divided, accused the Convention of past evils, and feared lest they were repeated. The society of Jacobins still fought on; they showed no repugnance for death. Legendre, once so violent, became human once more, and joined the Committee of General Security. On the night of Robespierre's torments, he sealed the lair; but eight days afterwards the Jacobins were re-established under the name of the Regenerated Jacobins. The women with their knitting were there again. Fréron published his resuscitated paper *L'Orateur du Peuple*, and while applauding the fall of Robespierre vigorously, he bowed to the power of the Convention. Marat's bust remained on view; the various committees, merely changing form, still existed.

A severe cold-spell and famine, combined with the political troubles, complicated the calamity: armed groups, augmented by women, formed shouting: 'Bread! Bread!' At last on the 1st Prairial (20th of May 1795) the door of the Convention was forced, Féraud assassinated, and his head planted on the President's desk. They tell of Boissy d'Anglas' impassivity; bad luck to whoever opposes an act of virtue!

The revolutionary vegetation pushed vigorously through the layer of manure, reddened with human blood, which served it as a base. Rossignol, Huchet, Grignon, Moïse Bayle, Amar, Choudieu, Hentz, Granet, Léonard Bourdon, all those distinguished by their excess, were penned behind the railings; yet our glory lay outside. While opposition to the Members of the Convention mounted, our triumphs against foreign nations stifled the public clamor. There were two Frances: one terrible within, the other admirable without; glory was juxtaposed with our crimes, as Bonaparte juxtaposed it with our freedoms. We have always found victory ahead of us like a dangerous reef.

It is useful to note the anachronism committed by attributing our success to the enormities we perpetrated: success was achieved before and after the Reign of Terror; thus the Terror counted for nothing in the

achievements of our armies. But success had a drawback: it cast a halo round the heads of those revolutionary spectres. One knows without question the date on which this glow attached itself to them: the taking of Holland, the passage of the Rhine, seemed like conquests with the axe, not the sword. In that confusion one failed to see how France could manage to free herself from the clogs which, despite the disaster which met the leading culprits, continued to oppress her: yet the liberator was at hand.

Bonaparte had kept with him the greater and worse part of the group of friends with whom he had become acquainted in the south and who, like him, had taken refuge in the capital. Saliceti, still a power among the Jacobin fraternity, was close to Napoleon; Fréron wishing to marry Pauline Bonaparte (Princess Borghèse) had the support of his future brother-in-law.

Far from the screeches of the forum and the tribune, Bonaparte walked in the Jardin des Plantes in the evening with Junot. Junot told him of his passion for Paulette, Napoleon confided in him his attraction towards Madame de Beauharnais: events had hatched a great man. Madame de Beauharnais had ties of friendship with Barras: it is probable that the relationship prompted the Commissioner of the Convention's memory, when the decisive moment arrived.



## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 11

#### The Days of Vendémiaire - Continued

Press freedom having been re-introduced, for a while it worked with a sense of deliverance; but as the democrats had no liking for that liberty and as the press savaged their mistakes, they accused it of being royalist. The Abbé Morellet, and La Harpe, fired off pamphlets to join those of the Spaniard Marchenna, that foul savant and abortion of the spirit. The young wore grey coats with lapels and black collars, renowned as the uniform of the Chouans. The meeting of the new legislature was the pretext for the gathering of the Sections. The Lepelletier Section, formerly known under the name of the Filles-Saint-Thomas Section, was the most vigorous; it appeared several times at the bar of the Convention to protest: Lacretelle the younger leant his voice to it with the same courage he showed on the day when Bonaparte bombarded the Parisians on the steps of Saint-Roch. The Sections, anticipating that the moment of struggle neared, summoned General Danican from Rouen to place him at their head. One can judge the fear of, and the sentiments of the Convention towards, the defenders they had gathered round them: *‘To the head of these Republicans,’* says Réal in his *Essai sur les Journées de Vendémiaire*, *‘who are known as the sacred battalion of the patriots of ’89, and into their ranks, they summoned those veterans of the Revolution who had served in six campaigns, who had fought beneath the walls of the Bastille, who had beaten down tyranny, and who armed themselves now to defend the same château they had attacked on the 10th of August. There I found the precious remnants of those old battalions of men from Liège, from Belgium, under the command of their former general Fyon.’*

Réal ends his account with this exclamatory address: *‘O you, through whom Europe has been conquered by a government without governors and armies without pay, Spirit of Liberty, watch over us yet!’* Those proud champions of freedom had lived through more than a few *‘days’*; they went off to end their hymns to liberty in the police bureau of a tyrant. Today that period is no more than a shattered outcrop over which the Revolution passed. Men who have spoken and acted with energy are passionate about events which no longer interest anyone! Living men gather the fruits of forgotten lives consumed on their behalf.

We have reached the revival of the Convention; the foremost assemblies were convened: committees, clubs, sections, made a terrible din.

The Convention, threatened by popular aversion, realized that it must defend itself: it countered Danican with Barras, named leader of the armed forces of Paris and the Interior. Having met Bonaparte in Toulon, and having been reminded of him by Madame de Beauharnais, Barras was struck by the help such a man might provide to him: he appointed him as his second-in-command. The future Director, supporting the Convention during the events of Vendémiaire, declared that it was to the prompt and expert dispositions made by Bonaparte that they owed the salvation of those encircled, around whom he had distributed the defenders with great skill. Napoleon struck at the Sections saying: *‘I have set my mark on France.’* Attila said: *‘I am the hammer of the world, ego malleus orbis.’*

After this success, Napoleon feared that he had made himself unpopular, and made certain that he gave several years of his life to erasing that page of his history.

There is in existence an account of the events of Vendémiaire from Napoleon's own hand: it attempts to prove that it was the Sections who commenced firing. In encountering them he might have imagined he was still in Toulon: General Carteaux was at the head of a column on the Pont Neuf; a company from Marseilles marched on Saint-Roch; the positions occupied by the National Guard were successively carried. Réal, in the narrative of which I have already spoken, ended his exposition with these stupidities that show the Parisians standing firm: there is a wounded man who, crossing the Salon des Victoires, recognizes a flag he had taken: '*Let us go no further,*' he cries in a dying voice, *I wish to die here*'; there is the wife of General Dufraisse who tears up his shirt for bandages; there are Durocher's two daughters who administer vinegar and brandy. Réal attributed everything to Barras: a sycophantic elision; it shows that Napoleon in Year IV, victorious for another's gain, was not yet taken into account.

Despite his triumph, Bonaparte did not expect rapid success, since he wrote to Bourrienne: '*Look out for a small property in your lovely Yonne valley; I will buy it when I have some money; but don't forget I don't want any national (church) property.*' In the Yonne valley lived Madame de Beaumont and Monsieur Joubert. Bonaparte changed his mind during the Empire: he took plenty of notice of national property. The riots of Vendémiaire ended that epoch of riots: they were not repeated until 1830, to finish off the monarchy.

Four months after the events of Vendémiaire, on the 19th Ventôse Year IV (9th of March 1796), Bonaparte married Marie-Josèphe Rose de Tascher. The certificate makes no mention of her as the widow of the Comte de Beauharnais. Tallien and Barras were the witnesses to the contract. On the 2nd of March Bonaparte had been appointed general of the troops stationed in the Alpes Maritimes; Carnot opposed Barras in demanding the honor of this nomination. The command of the Army of Italy was described as *Madame Beauharnais' dowry*. Napoleon, who spoke of this at St. Helena, with disdain, knowing he allied himself to a great lady, lacked gratitude.

Napoleon entered fully into his destiny: he needed men, men would have need of him; events made him, he would make events. He had now passed through those misfortunes to which superior natures are condemned before being recognized, forced to humble themselves before mediocrities whose patronage is necessary to them: the seed of the tallest palm-tree is at first protected, by the Arabs, under a clay pot.

BOOK XIX  
CHAPTER 12  
The Italian Campaign

Arriving in Nice, at the headquarters of the Army of Italy, Bonaparte found the soldiers in a state of total deprivation, half-naked, without boots, bread, or discipline. He was twenty-six years old; under his command he had Masséna with thirty-eight thousand men. It was the year 1796. He opened his first campaign on the 27th of March, a notable date among those which came to be etched on his life. He defeated Beaulieu at Montenotte; two days later, at Millesimo he split the Austrian and Sardinian armies. At Ceva, Mondovi, Fossano, and Cherasco the success continued; the spirit of war itself had descended. The proclamation of peace caused a new voice to be heard, just as the battles had announced a new man:

*‘Soldiers, in fifteen days, you have gained six victories, taken twenty-one flags, fifty-five pieces of canon, fifteen thousand prisoners, and killed or wounded more than ten thousand men! You have won battles with guns, crossed rivers without bridges, made forced marches without boots, bivouacked without brandy, and often without bread. The Republican phalanxes, the soldiers of liberty alone were capable of suffering what you have suffered; thanks are due you, soldiers! ...*

*People of Italy! The French army has come to break your chains; the French people are friends with all nations. We are angry only with the tyrants who enslave you.’*

On the 15th of May peace was concluded between the French Republic and the King of Sardinia; Savoy was ceded to France with Nice and Tende. Napoleon kept advancing, and wrote to Carnot:

*‘From headquarters at Piacenza, 9th of May 1796*

*We have crossed the Po at last: the second campaign has begun; Beaulieu is confounded; he miscalculates badly, and constantly falls into the traps one sets for him. Perhaps he is keen to give battle, since the man has the courage of anger, and not that of genius. One more victory and we are masters of Italy. The moment that we cease the advance, we will re-equip the army. It always inspires fear; but has grown fat; the soldiers only eat white bread, and excellent meat in quantity, etc. Discipline is being established day by day; but it is often necessary to shoot some of them, since they are intractable creatures without self-control. What we have done to the enemy is incalculable. The more men you send me the more easily I will feed them. I am having twenty paintings by the most important masters, Corregio and Michelangelo, shipped to you. I owe you special thanks, for the attention you have been so good as to show my wife. I recommend her to you: she is a true patriot, and I love her deeply. I hope things are going well, being in a position to send to you in Paris, twelve millions: that will not do you too badly for the Army of the Rhine. Send me four thousand un-mounted cavalymen, I will find a way to provide them with mounts here. I will not conceal from you, that since the death of Stengel, I no longer have a first class cavalry officer for a fight. I would like you to send me two or three adjutants with some fire, and a firm resolution never to make cautious retreats.’*

It is one of Napoleon’s most remarkable letters. What vivacity! What variety of genius! With news of heroics we find, thrown into this triumphant profusion, pell-mell, Michelangelo’s art, sharp wit directed

against a rival regarding adjutants *firmly resolved never to make cautious retreats*. On the same day, Bonaparte wrote to the Directory, to give notice of the suspension of hostilities agreed with the Duke of Parma, and to send on Correggio's Saint Jérôme. On the 11th of May, he announced to Carnot the crossing of the bridge at Lodi, which gave France possession of Lombardy. If he did not proceed to Milan immediately, it was because he wished to pursue Beaulieu and finish him off. – *'If I take Mantua, there is nothing to stop me from penetrating Bavaria; in twenty days I can reach the heart of Germany. If the two Armies of the Rhine begin a campaign, I beg you to let me know their positions. It would be worthy of the Republic if three united armies signed a peace treaty at the heart of Bavaria and a stunned Austria.'*

The eagle does not march it flies, adorned with the banners of victory draped from its neck and wings.

He complains that they want to give him Kellerman as deputy: *'I cannot serve willingly with a man who thinks himself Europe's greatest general, and I believe a single bad general is better than two good ones.'*

On the 1st of June 1796 the Austrians were driven from Italy completely and our advance-guard was reconnoitering the mountains of Germany: *'Our grenadiers and our carabiniers,'* Bonaparte wrote to the Directory, *'toy with and laugh at death. Nothing equals their fearlessness, unless it is the cheerfulness with which they endure long forced marches. You might think that once they have made camp they at least must sleep; not at all: each makes up his report or describes his plan of campaign for next day, and often one sees by that who come across most soundly. The other day I was watching a half-brigade marching by; a chasseur approached my horse: "General," he said to me, "such and such must be done".'* –

*"Wretch,"* I said to him, *"will you be silent!"* He disappeared instantly; I had him searched for in vain: precisely what I ordered had been done to him.'

The soldiers promoted their commander: at Lodi he was a corporal, at Castiglione a sergeant.

On the 17th of November they advanced on Arcola: their young general crossed the bridge which made him famous; ten thousand men were left on the field. *'It was a chapter from the Iliad!'* Bonaparte cried at the mere memory of that action.

In Germany, Moreau carried out the celebrated retreat that Napoleon jealousy called a *sergeant's retreat*. Bonaparte was preparing to say to his rival, on beating Archduke Charles:

*'I will follow your illustrious retreat, so near as to handle him without an interpreter.'*

On the 14th of January 1797, hostilities were renewed at the battle of Rivoli. Two confrontations with Wurmser, at San Giorgio and at La Favorita, entailed for the enemy the loss of five thousand dead and twenty thousand prisoners; the inhabitants barricaded themselves in Mantua; the town, blockaded, capitulated; Wurmser, with the twelve thousand men remaining to him, surrendered.

The March of Ancona was soon invaded; later the Treaty of Tolentino brought the French pearls, diamonds, precious manuscripts, the Transfiguration, the Laocoon, the Apollo Belvedere, and ended this sequence of military operations during which in less than a year four Austrian armies had been destroyed,

northern Italy subjugated and the Tyrol opened up; there was hardly time to know where one was: the lightning and the blow fell together.

Archduke Charles, hastening to defend the Austrian front with a fresh army, is forced back at the River Tagliamento; Gradisca falls; Trieste is taken; the preliminaries of peace between France and Austria are signed at Leoben.

Venice, created during the fall of the Roman Empire, betrayed and troubled, opened its lagoons and palaces to us; a revolution (31st of May, 1797) took place in its rival Genoa: the Ligurian Republic was born. Bonaparte would have been astonished if, in the midst of his conquests, he could have known that he was seizing Venice for Austria, the Papal Legations for Rome, Naples for the Bourbons, Genoa for Piedmont, Spain for England, Westphalia for Prussia, and Poland for Russia, like those soldiers who, in sacking a town, load themselves with spoils they are forced to abandon, being unable to carry them, while at that very moment they are losing their native land.

On the 9th of July, the Cisalpine Republic was proclaimed. In Bonaparte's correspondence one can see him shuttling between these links in the chain of revolutions connected to our own: like Mahomet with the scimitar and the Koran, we advanced with a sword in one hand, the rights of man in the other.

In the mass of general activity, Bonaparte lets no detail escape him: now he fears lest the *old masters*, works of the great painters of Venice, Bologna, and Milan get a wetting crossing Mont Cenis; now he is anxious lest a papyrus manuscript from the Ambrosian Library is lost; he begs the Minister of the Interior to let him know if it has arrived at the National Library. He gives the Executive Directors his opinion of his generals:

*'Berthier: talent, energy, courage, and character, he has everything going for him.*

*Augereau: plenty of character, courage, steadiness, energy; liked by the soldiers, fortunate in what he undertakes.*

*Masséna: active, indefatigable, has the courage, quickness of eye, and readiness to make decisions.*

*Sérurier: fights alongside his men, lacks initiative; steadfast; has a poor opinion of his troops; is ill.*

*Despinis: lethargic, without energy or courage, not fit for war, not liked by his men, does not fight at the front; other than that he has stature, intelligence, and sound political principles; fine as a commander in the interior.*

*Sauret: good, a very good soldier, not bright enough to be a general; unlucky.*

*Abbatucci: not fit to command fifty men, etc., etc.'*

Bonaparte writes to the leader of the Maniots: *'The French esteem that small, but brave people who, alone of ancient Greece, have retained their virtue, worthy descendants of Sparta, who only lack a presence in a wider theatre to achieve their ancestors' fame.'* He instructs the authorities to take

possession of Corfu: ‘*The island of Corcyra,*’ he remarks, ‘*was, according to Homer, the land of Princess Nausicaa.*’ He sends off the peace treaty concluded with Venice: ‘*Our navy acquired four or five men of war there, three or four frigates, and three or four million lines of rigging – Give me French or Corsican sailors,*’ he requests; ‘*I will take those of Mantua or Guarda. – A million for Toulon, as I told you, goes off tomorrow; two millions, etc., will make the sum of five millions that the Army of Italy will have supplied during the latest campaign. – I have charged...with going to Sion to try and open negotiations with the Valais. – I have sent an excellent engineer to find out how much it would cost to open up that route (the Simplon)...I have charged the same engineer with seeing what it would take to blow up the rocks through which the Rhône escapes, and by so doing to make the exploitation of the woods of Valais and Savoy possible.*’ He gives notice that he is about to send a load of wheat and steel from Trieste to Genoa. He makes a present to the Pasha of Scutari of four cases of rifles, as a mark of friendship. He orders several suspects to be sent back to Milan, and has several others arrested. He writes to Citizen Grognard, the naval administrator at Toulon: ‘*I am not your judge, but if you were under my command, I would put you under arrest for having sanctioned such a ridiculous requisition.*’ A note handed to the Pope’s minister reads: ‘*The Pope will perhaps consider it worthy of his wisdom, of the holiest of religions, to issue a Bull or a mandate ordering priests to obey the government.*’

All this was intermingled with his negotiations with the new Republics, details of festivals celebrating Virgil and Ariosto, explanatory docketts for twenty Venetian paintings and five hundred manuscripts; all this conducted in an Italy deafened with the sounds of battle, an Italy become a furnace in which our grenadiers existed like salamanders in the flames.

Within this whirlwind of events and victories the 18th Fructidor arrived, encouraged by Bonaparte’s proclamations and the debates among his troops jealous of the Army of the Meuse. Then the man who, perhaps wrongly, was considered the author of the plans which brought Republican victories, vanished; we were assured that Danissy, Lafitte and D’Arcon, three superior military geniuses, had directed those plans: Carnot found himself proscribed through Bonaparte’s influence.

On the 17th of October, the latter signed the Peace treaty of Campo-Formio: the first Continental War waged by the Revolution ended thirty leagues from Vienna.

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 13

The Congress of Rastadt – Napoleon's return to France – Napoleon is named Commander of the Army against England – He leaves on the Egyptian Expedition

A Congress was established at Rastadt, and Bonaparte, having been named as the Directory's representative at the congress, took leave of the Army of Italy. '*I am only consoled,*' he announced to them, '*by the expectation of finding myself with you again soon, struggling against new dangers.*' On the 16th of November 1797, his order of the day proclaimed that he had left Milan in order to preside over the French embassy to the conference, and that he had sent the flag of the Army of Italy to the Directory.

On one side of the banner Napoleon had ordered this summary of his victories to be embroidered: '*One hundred and fifty thousand prisoners, seventeen thousand horses, five hundred and fifty siege-guns, six-hundred field pieces, five bridge kits, nine fifty-four gun vessels, twelve thirty-two gun frigates, twelve corvettes, eighteen galleys; an armistice with the King of Sardinia, a convention with the Genoans; an armistice with the Duke of Parma, with the Duke of Modena, with the King of Naples, with the Pope; the preliminaries of Leoben; the convention of Montebello with the Genoan Republic; the peace treaty with the Emperor at Campo-Formio; liberty granted to the people of Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, Massa-Carrara, Romagna, Lombardy, Brescia, Bergamo, Mantua, Cremona, part of Verona, Chiavenna, Bormio, and Valtellina; to the people of Genoa, to the Imperial fiefs, to the people of the departments of Corcyra, the Aegean Sea, and Ithaca.*

*Sent to Paris all the master-works of Michelangelo, Guercino, Titian, Paolo-Veronese, Correggio, Albani, Carrachi, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci etc., etc.*

*This remembrance of the Army of Italy,' says the order of the day, 'will be suspended from the ceiling of the public meeting room of the Directory, and will bear witness to the exploits of our soldiers when the present generation has vanished.'*

After a purely military convention which stipulated the relinquishment of Mainz to Republican troops and that of Venice to Austrian troops, Bonaparte quit Rastadt and left the rest of the business of the Congress to Treilhard and Bonnier.

In the final period of the Italian Campaign, Bonaparte suffered much from the envy of various generals and the Directory: twice he offered his resignation; the members of the government desired it but dared not accept it. Bonaparte's sentiments did not conform to the tendencies of the century; he yielded reluctantly to forces generated during the Revolution: from this arose the contradictions in his actions and ideas.

Returning to Paris, he arrived at his house on the Rue Chantierine, which took the name which it bears today, *Rue de la Victoire*. The Council of Elders wanted to make Napoleon the gift of Chambord, that work of Francois I, which now only recalls the exile of Saint Louis' last descendant. Bonaparte was presented to the Directory on the 10th of December 1797, in the courtyard of the Luxembourg Palace. In the center of the courtyard an altar to the *Motherland* had been erected, topped by statues of *Liberty*,

*Equality*, and *Peace*. The flags of conquest formed a canopy above the five Directors dressed in classical style; the shadow of *Victory* was cast by these flags, beneath which France halted for a moment. Bonaparte was dressed in the uniform he had worn at Arcola and Lodi. Monsieur de Talleyrand received the victor at the altar, reviving memories of his formerly having said mass at another altar. Having fled to and returned from the United States, charged through Chénier's patronage with the Foreign Ministry, the Bishop of Autun, sword at his side, was wearing a hat in the style of Henri IV: events required one to take these travesties seriously.

The prelate praised the conqueror of Italy: '*He loves,*' he said in a melancholy manner, '*he loves the poems of Ossian, especially because they raise one above the earth. Far from fearing what is said to be his ambition, perhaps we will have to solicit it one day to drag him from the delights of his studious retreat. All of France will be free; perhaps he himself will never be so: such is his destiny.*'

Marvelously prescient!

Saint Louis' brother at Grandella, Charles VIII at Fornovo, Louis XII at Agnadello, Francis I at Marignan, Lautrec at Ravenna, Catinat at Turin, were no match for this new general. Napoleon's success was unshadowed by a Pavia.

The Directors, fearing this superior despotism that threatened all despotism, watched the homage being rendered to Napoleon, with anxiety; they considered ridding themselves of his presence. They looked with faveur on the desire he showed for an expedition to the East. He said: '*Europe is a mole-hill; the great empires and revolutions have all been in the East; already my glory is exhausted: this tiny Europe does not offer enough.*' Napoleon, like a child, was delighted to be elected as a member of the Institute. He asked for a mere six years to reach the Indies and return. '*I am only twenty-nine,*' he remarked, on consideration, '*that's no age at all: I will only be thirty-five when I return.*'

Named as commander of the Army against England, its corps scattered from Brest to Antwerp, Bonaparte spent his time carrying out inspections, and making visits to civil and scientific authorities, while the troops destined to compose the Army of Egypt were being assembled. Disturbances took place regarding the tricolor and the red bonnet that our Ambassador in Vienna, General Bernadotte, had draped over the entrance to the Embassy. The Directory was inclined to retain Napoleon in order to combat the possibility of fresh warfare, when Count von Cobenzl avoided a rupture, and Bonaparte received the order to depart. With Italy now republican, Holland a republic, peace allowed France extending to the Rhine, the soldiers idle, the Directory fearful with anxiety hastened the conqueror's departure. This Egyptian adventure enhanced at a stroke Napoleon's luck and genius, by gilding his genius, already excessively bright, striking with a ray of sunlight the pillars of cloud and fire.



## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 14

Malta – The Battle of the Pyramids – Cairo – Napoleon inside the Great Pyramid – Suez.

*Toulon, 19th May 1798.*

#### *PROCLAMATION.*

*‘Soldiers,*

*You are one flank of the Army against England.*

*You have made war in the mountains, in the plains, you have conducted sieges; it only remains for you to make war at sea.*

*The Roman legions you have often imitated but not yet equaled fought Carthage time after time over this same sea, and on the plain of Zama. Victory never forsook them, because they were continually brave, patient in withstanding fatigue, disciplined and united.*

*Soldiers, Europe is watching you! You have a great destiny to fulfil, battles to wage, danger and weariness to vanquish; you will achieve more than you already have for your country’s prosperity, the benefit of men and your own glory.’*

After this memorable proclamation, Napoleon embarked: as in Homer one might say, or like the hero who kept Maeonides’ songs in a golden casket. This man never trod softly: scarcely had he left Italy behind than he appeared in Egypt; an episode from fiction with which he embellished real life. Like Charlemagne he brought epic to history. In the library he carried with him were to be found Ossian, Werther, La Nouvelle Héloïse and the Old Testament: an indication of the chaos inside Napoleon’s head. He mingled together positive ideas with sentimental novels, systems with chimeras, serious studies with transports of the imagination, wisdom with folly. With these incoherent products of the century he took an Empire; an immense dream, but as transient as the disorder of the night that bore him.

Entering Toulon on the 9th of May 1798, Napoleon halted at the Hôtel de la Marine; ten days later he boarded the flagship L’Orient; on the 19th of May he set sail; he left from the port where he had first shed blood, French blood: the massacres at Toulon had prepared him for the massacres at Jaffa. He took with him the first generals born of his glory: Berthier, Caffarelli, Kléber, Desaix, Lannes, Murat, and Menou. Thirteen ships of the line, fourteen frigates, and four hundred transport vessels accompanied him.

Nelson allowed him to escape from port and lost him among the waves, though at one point our fleet was less than six leagues distant from the English ships. From Sicilian waters, Napoleon saw the summit of the Apennines; he said: *‘I cannot view Italian soil without emotion; there is the East; I am on my way there.’* On seeing Mount Ida, there followed an outburst of admiration regarding Minos and ancient wisdom. During the crossing, Bonaparte delighted in gathering the savants together and provoking disputes among them; he was usually won over to the most absurd or most audacious viewpoint; he

questioned whether the planets were inhabited, when they would be destroyed by water or fire, as if he had been charged with inspecting a celestial army.

He landed at Malta, and winked out the old chivalry that had withdrawn into a hole in a rock by the sea; then he descended on the ruins of Alexander's city. At the break of day he saw that same Pompey's Pillar that I caught sight of from my ship on leaving Libya. From the foot of the monument, immortalized by a great and sorrowful name, he made a dash forward; he climbed the walls behind which was once found *the storehouse of medicines for the soul*, and *Cleopatra's Needles*, now lying on the ground among the skinny dogs. The port of Rosetta was forced; our troops rushed towards the two harbors and the lighthouse. There was a terrible cutting of throats! The adjutant-general Boyer wrote to his relatives: *'The Turks, driven back on all sides, took refuge in their god and their prophet; they filled the mosques; men, women, old, young, children, all were massacred.'*

Bonaparte had said to the Bishop of Malta: *'You can assure your diocese that the Catholic religion, apostolic and Roman, will not only be respected, but its ministers will be given special protection.'* He said, on arrival in Egypt: *'People of Egypt, I respect God, his Prophet, and the Koran more than the Mamelukes do. The French are friends of the Muslims. Previously they have marched on Rome and overthrown the rule of a Pope who embittered Christians against those who profess Islam; soon afterwards they set course towards Malta, and have driven from there the unbelievers who thought to call on God to make war against Muslims....if Egypt is leased to the Mamelukes, let them show us the lease God has given them.'*

Napoleon marched to the Pyramids; he announced to his soldiers: *'Soldiers, from the heights of these monuments forty centuries are gazing down upon you.'* He entered Cairo; his fleet was blown to the sky at Aboukir; the Army of the East was cut off from Europe. Jullien (de Paris), son of the Jullien (de la Drôme) who was a Member of the Convention, witness to the disaster, noted it minute by minute:

*'It was seven in the evening; night fell and the firing redoubled. At a few minutes past nine the ship blew up. At ten the firing died down and the moon rose to the right of the place the explosion had come from.'*

In Cairo Bonaparte declares to the chief justice that he will be the restorer of mosques; he broadcasts his name through Arabia, Ethiopia, and India. Cairo rebels; he bombards it in the midst of a storm; the inspired one speaks to the believers: *'I could demand that each of you make an account of the most secret feelings of his heart, since I know all, even those things you have told to no one.'*

The high Sherif of Mecca names him, in a letter, the protector of the *Ka'aba*; the Pope, in a missive, calls him *my very dear son*.

Through a weakness of character, Bonaparte often preferred to address his petty rather than his grand side. The game he could win with a blow failed to amuse him. The hand which shattered the world enjoyed playing with tumblers; assured, when it exerted its powers, of compensating for this waste, his genius mended the defects of his nature. Did he not present himself above all as the heir of the crusaders? Through his twofold status, he was, in the eyes of the Muslim masses, both a false Christian and a false Mahometan. To admire the impieties of a belief is to fail to understand what is wretched about it, and to be wretchedly in error: one must weep when a giant is reduced to making grimaces. The infidels offered

Saint Louis, in chains, the crown of Egypt, because he remained, say the historians, the finest Christian they had ever seen.

When I visited Cairo, the city still retained traces of the French: a public garden, an undertaking of ours, was planted with palm-trees; restaurant owners' establishments had long ago surrounded it. Unfortunately, like the ancient Egyptians, our soldiers promenaded a coffin at their feasts.

What a memorable scene, if one could believe in it! Bonaparte seated inside the Pyramid of Cheops, on a Pharaoh's sarcophagus from which the mummified remains had vanished, talking to the muftis and imams! However, let us treat the tale in the *Moniteur* as a work of the Muse. If it is not a true tale of Napoleon, it is the tale of his intellect; that makes it still worth the trouble of reading. In the depths of the sepulchre let us listen to that voice that all the centuries will hear.

(*Moniteur*, 27th November 1798.)

*'Today, the 25th Thermidor of Year VI of the one and indivisible French Republic (12th of August 1798), corresponding to the 28th day of the moon of Muharram, in the Year of the Hegira 1213, the Commander-in-Chief accompanied by several army staff officers and members of the National Institute was taken to the Great Pyramid, said to be that of Cheops, in the interior of which he was attended by several muftis and imams, charged with showing him the internal construction.'*

*The final room which the Commander-in-Chief came to is flat-roofed, thirty-two feet long by sixteen wide and nineteen high. There was nothing inside it but a granite box about eight feet long by four wide, which contained a Pharaoh's mummy. He sat down on the granite block, making the muftis and imams, Suleiman, Ibrahim and Muhammed sit at his feet, and in the presence of his entourage had the following conversation with them:*

Bonaparte: *'God is great and his works are wonderful. Here is a great work from the hand of man! What was the purpose of whoever had this Pyramid constructed?'*

Suleiman: *'It was a powerful king of Egypt, whose name is believed to have been Cheops. He wished to prevent any sacrilege being committed that might disturb his ashes.'*

Bonaparte: *'The great Cyrus had himself interred in the open air, so that his body might return to the elements: do you not think that better? Do you not think so?'*

Suleiman (Bowing): *'Glory to God, to whom all glory is due!'*

Bonaparte: *'Glory to Allah! There is no other God but God; Mohammed is his prophet, and I am one of his friends.'*

Ibrahim: *'May the angels of victory sweep the dust from your robe and cover you with their wings! The Mamelukes deserve death.'*

Bonaparte: *'They have been delivered over to the dark angels Munkar and Nakir.'*

Suleiman: *'They extend their rapacious hands over the land, the harvest, and the horses of Egypt.'*

Bonaparte: *'The wealth, industry and friendship of the Franks will be your portion, until you mount to the seventh heaven and sit beside the black-eyed houris, ever-young and ever-virgin, and rest in the shade of the Tuba, whose branches offer of themselves to true Muslims whatever they might desire.'*

Such a spectacle does nothing to alter the gravity of the Pyramids:

*'For twenty centuries, lost in eternal night,  
There, without motion, without sound or light.'* [-Lemoine]

Bonaparte, replacing Cheops, in the age-old crypt, would have increased its immensity; but he was never even dragged as far as the vestibule of the dead.

*'During the rest of our navigation of the Nile,' as I say in the Itinerary, 'I stayed on the bridge to contemplate the tombs.....Great monuments are an essential part of the glory of all human society: they carry the memory of a people beyond its own existence, and make it contemporary with the generations who chance to establish themselves on those deserted fields.'*

Let us thank Bonaparte, at the Pyramids, for having represented us so well, all we petty Statesmen marred by poetry, who prowl among the ruins with our wretched lies.

After Bonaparte's proclamations, orders of the day, speeches, it is evident that he saw himself as a messenger of the heavens, following Alexander's example. Callisthenes, upon whom the Macedonian later inflicted such cruel treatment, surely in punishment for the philosopher's flattery of him, was charged with proving that Philip's son was the son of Jupiter; that is what one reads in a fragment of Callisthenes preserved by Strabo. *The Conversations with Alexander*, by Pasquier, is a dialogue of the dead between Alexander and Rabelais the great satirist: *'Run your eye,'* says Alexander to Rabelais, *'over all those lands you can see down there, and you won't find anyone of note who, in order to enforce his opinions, won't want it given out that he is related to the gods.'* Rabelais replies: *'Alexander, to tell you the truth, I never found it amusing to share any of your little peculiarities, any more than ones involving wine. What benefit do you gain from your greatness now? Are you any different to me? The regret you feel ought to cause you such anger, that it would have been better for you to have lost your memory with your body.'*

And yet, in occupying himself with Alexander, Bonaparte was mistaken concerning himself, his epoch of the world, and religion: today, one cannot hope to pass for a god. As for Napoleon's exploits in the Levant, they were not equivalent as yet to his conquest of Europe; they failed to achieve great enough results to impress the Islamic masses, though they did name him the *Sultan of Fire*. *'Alexander, at the age of thirty,'* says Montaigne, *'had conquered all the known world, and, in half a lifetime, had achieved all that human effort is capable of. More kings and princes have written about his exploits, than any other historians have written concerning any other king.'*

From Cairo, Bonaparte passed to Suez: he saw the sea which opened for Moses, and closed again over Pharaoh. He recognized the traces of a canal begun by Sesostris, widened by the Persians, and continued

by Ptolemy II, which the Sultans had recommenced with the aim of transporting the commerce of the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. He planned to extend an arm of the Nile into the Arabian Gulf: far along the Gulf his imagination traced out a site for a new Ophir, where a permanent market could be held for the sellers of perfumes, spices and silken stuffs, all the precious objects from Muscat, China, Ceylon, Sumatra, the Philippines, and India. The coenobites would descend from Sinai, and beg him to inscribe his name next to that of Saladin, in the book of their *guarantors*.

Returning from Cairo, Bonaparte celebrated the annual feast of the founding of the Republic, while addressing these words to his soldiers: *'Five years ago the freedom of the French people was threatened; but you took Toulon; that presaged the ruin of your enemies. A year later you beat the Austrians at Dego; the following year, you were at the summit of the Alps; you fought at Mantua, two years ago, and brought me the celebrated victory of San Giorgio; last year, you were at the sources of the Drava and Isonzo, on your way back from Germany. Who would have thought then that today you would be on the banks of the Nile, at the heart of an ancient continent?'*

BOOK XIX  
CHAPTER 15  
The Army's opinion

But was Bonaparte, in the midst of the cares which preoccupied him and the plans he had conceived, truly obsessed? While he appeared to wish to stay in Egypt, fiction had not blinded him to reality, and he wrote to Joseph, his brother: *'I expect to be in France in two months' time; make sure I have a country house when I arrive, near Paris or in Burgundy; I count on spending the winter there.'* Bonaparte never thought for a moment that anyone might oppose his return: his will was his destiny and his fortune. This correspondence having fallen into the Admiralty's hands, the English dared to suggest that Napoleon had no other object than to destroy his army. One of Bonaparte's letters contains complaints about his wife's coquetry.

The French, in Egypt, were all the more heroic in that they felt their ills vividly. A sergeant wrote to one of his friends: *'Tell Ledoux not to be foolish enough as to embark for this wretched country.'*

Avrieury: *'Everyone who goes inland says that Alexandria is the best of the towns: alas, what must the rest be like! Imagine a confused pile of badly-built one-storey houses; the finest with a terrace, a little wooden door, lock idem; no windows, but a wooden grill so close-made that it is impossible to see anyone on the other side. Narrow streets: except the quarter for the French and the grandees. The poorer inhabitants, who make up the vast number, naked save for a blue shift down to mid-thigh, which is rucked up half the time by their movements, a belt and a ragged turban. I have had my fill of this charming country. I hate being here. Wretched Egypt! Sand everywhere! What a joke of a nation, dear friend! All these fortune seekers, or rather all these thieves, are depressed; they would like to go back where they came from: I can well believe it.'*

Rozis, captain: *'We are very wretched; also there is general discontent in the army; the tyranny has never been as bad as today; we have soldiers who have been put to death in front of the commander in chief, while shouting at him: This is all your doing!'*

The name of Tallien shall terminate the list of these virtual unknowns today:

*TALLIEN TO MADAME TALLIEN.*

*'As for me, my dear friend, I am here, as you know, much against my will; my situation becomes more disagreeable day by day, since, far from my country, and all I hold dear, I cannot foresee the time when I will return to it.*

*I confess to you freely, I would a thousand times prefer to be settled with you and your daughter in some corner of the earth, far from all passion, all intrigue, and I assure you that if I have the good fortune to touch the soil of my own land again, it will be in order to leave it no more. Among the forty thousand Frenchmen here, there are scarcely four of them who think otherwise.*

*Nothing is sadder than the life we lead here! We lack everything. For five days I have not closed my eyes; I am lying on the floor; the flies, bugs, ants, mosquitoes, all the insects devour us, and twenty times a day I regret our delightful cottage. I beg you, my dear friend, don't relinquish it.*

*Farewell, my good Thérésia, tears flood the paper. The sweetest memories of your kindness, of our love, the hope of finding you ever-loving, ever-faithful, of embracing my dear daughter, they alone sustain me in wretchedness.'*

Fidelity counted for something in those days.

This unanimity of complaint is the natural exaggeration of men who have tumbled from the heights of illusion: the French have always dreamed of the East; chivalry traced out a route for them; if they no longer had the faith which might lead them to the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, they had the courage of crusaders, and a belief in the royalty and beauty that the chroniclers and troubadours wove around Godfrey. The victorious soldiers of Italy saw a rich country to capture, caravans to rob, horses, weapons and seraglios to conquer; novelists caught a glimpse of the Princess of Antioch, and scholars added their dreams to the enthusiasm of the poets. It was not just about the Voyage de Anténor, which passed at first for scholarly reality: they would penetrate mysterious Egypt, descend into the catacombs, search the Pyramids, find unknown manuscripts, decipher the hieroglyphics and awaken Thermosiris. When, instead of all that, the Institute descending on the Pyramids, the soldiers encountering only naked fellahin and dried mud huts, found themselves faced with plague, Bedouin and Mamelukes, it was an enormous disappointment. But their unmerited suffering blinded them to the permanent result. The French sowed in Egypt the seeds of civilization which Méhémet has cultivated: Bonaparte's glory increased; a ray of light penetrated the darkness of Islam, and barbarism was breached.

BOOK XIX  
CHAPTER 16  
The Syrian Campaign

In order to prevent hostilities by the Pashas of Syria and pursue the Mamelukes, on the 22nd of February 1799 Bonaparte entered that region of the world which the action at Aboukir had bequeathed to him. Napoleon was deceived; it was merely one of his dreams of power he was pursuing. Happier than Cambyses, he crossed the desert without encountering the southerly wind; he camped among tombs; he assaulted El-Arish, and triumphed in Gaza: ‘*We reached*,’ he wrote on the 6th, ‘*the pillars planted at the boundary of Africa and Asia; we slept that night in Asia.*’ That great man marched to the conquest of the world; he was a conqueror of climates which were not to be conquered.

Jaffa was taken. After the assault, a portion of the garrison estimated by Bonaparte at twelve hundred men and taken by others to be two or three thousand, surrendered and were shown mercy: two days later, Bonaparte ordered their execution.

Walter Scott and Sir Robert Wilson have told of these massacres; Bonaparte, at Elba and St Helena, found no difficulty in admitting them to Lord Ebrington, and the doctor O’Meara. But he rejected their odium because of the position in which he found himself: he *could not feed the prisoners*; he *could not send them back to Egypt unguarded*. Allow them their liberty on parole? They would not even have comprehended such a point of honor and such European procedures. ‘*Wellington, in my place*,’ he said, ‘*would have acted as I did.*’

‘*Napoleon decided*,’ says Monsieur Thiers, ‘*on a terrible measure which is the only cruel action of his life; he had the remaining prisoners put to death at the blade of the sword; the army carried out, with obedience but with a species of terror, the execution he had commanded.*’

*The only cruel action of his life*, that is a fine assertion after the massacres at Toulon, after all Napoleon’s campaigns that treated human life as of no account. It is a glorious thing for France that our soldiers protested, by a *species of terror*, against their general’s cruelty.

But did the massacres at Jaffa save our army? Had Bonaparte not seen how easily a handful of Frenchmen had overthrown the forces of the Pasha of Damascus? At Aboukir, had he not destroyed thirteen thousand Ottomans with a few cavalry? Had not Kléber, later, made a Grand Vizir and his myriads of Mahometans vanish? If he was acting rightly, what right did the French have to invade Egypt? Why did he cut the throats of men who were only employing the right of self-defense? Finally, Bonaparte could not invoke the rules of war, because the prisoners of the Jaffa garrison had *laid down their arms* and their *surrender had been accepted*. The event which the conqueror tried hard to justify embarrassed him; that event is passed over in silence or indicated vaguely in the official dispatches and the reminiscences of men attached to Bonaparte. ‘*I will avoid*,’ says Doctor Larrey, ‘*speaking about the horrible aftermath entailed in an assault: I was the sad witness of that at Jaffa.*’ Bourrienne wrote: ‘*That atrocious scene still makes me shudder when I think of it, as on the day I saw it, and I would prefer to forget it than be forced to describe it. Everything one could imagine of a day steeped in blood would still fall short of the reality.*’



Bonaparte wrote to the Directory that; *'Jaffa was delivered over to pillage and all the horrors of war which had never seemed so hideous to me.'* Those horrors, who commanded them?

On the 5th of May 1809, Berthier, companion to Napoleon in Egypt, being head-quartered at Enns, in Austria, addressed a forceful dispatch to the major general of the Austrian army, violently opposing a claimed shooting incident in the Tyrol, where Chasteler commanded: *'He has allowed the destruction (Chasteler) of seven hundred French prisoners and eighteen or nineteen hundred Bavarians; a crime unheard-of in the history of nations, which would have deserved a terrible reprisal if His Majesty had not considered the prisoners as protected by his faith and honor.'*

Bonaparte says here all that can be said against the execution of the prisoners at Jaffa. What did such contradictions matter to him? He knew the truth and made light of it; he treated it as if it were a lie; he only had regard for the end, the means were all the same to him; the number of prisoners was an embarrassment, he killed them.

There were always two Bonapartes: one great, the other little. When you think to enter Napoleon's life in safety, he renders that life appalling.

Miot, in the first edition of his *Memoirs* (1804) is silent about the massacre; one only finds it in the 1814 edition. Copies of that edition are scarce; I had difficulty finding one. To confirm a truth so tragic, I never accept less than an eye-witness's report. One can know about the existence of something superficially, or one can comprehend its specifics: the moral truth of an event is only revealed in the details of that event; here they are according to Miot:

*'On the afternoon of the 20th Ventôse (10th of March, 1799), the Jaffa prisoners were marched into the center of a vast square of soldiers formed by General Bon's troops. A rumor of the fate being prepared for them made me determine, like many others, to mount my horse and follow that silent column of victims, to ascertain whether what I had been told had any foundation. The Turks, marching out of step, foresaw their fate; there were no tears; there were no cries; they were resigned. Some of the wounded, being unable to follow quickly enough, were executed at bayonet point. Others circulated in the crowd, and seemed to be giving advice helpful in the light of such imminent danger. Perhaps they hoped that by scattering over the area they were crossing, a certain number might evade death. All due measures had been taken in that regard, and the Turks made no attempt to escape.*

*Arriving eventually at the sand-dunes to the south-west of Jaffa, they were halted by a pool of yellowish water. There the officer commanding the troops divided the mass of men into several sections, and these groups, led to several different places, were shot. This terrible action required a great deal of time, despite the number of soldiers, reserved for the fatal sacrifice, and who, I must declare, only lent themselves with extreme repugnance to the abominable task demanded of their victorious weapons. Near to the pool of water one group of prisoners, among whom were several older leaders of calm and noble appearance, and a young man whose resolve was weak. At so tender an age, he believed himself innocent, and that feeling drove him to an act that seemed to shock those around him. He threw himself at the legs of the horse carrying the leader of the French troops; he clasped that officer's knee, and implored his mercy. He shouted; 'What am I guilty of? What wrong have I done?' The tears he wept, his touching cries, were in vain; he could not alter the fatal order that determined his doom. With the exception of this*

*young man, all the other Turks calmly washed themselves in the stagnant water of which I have spoken, then, taking each other's hand, after carrying it to the heart and the mouth, as the Muslim greeting goes, they gave and received an eternal farewell. Their courageous hearts appeared to defy death; in their tranquility one saw the confidence that their religion inspired in them, in those last moments, and their hope of a joyful afterlife. They seemed to say; 'I leave this world to go and enjoy closeness to Mahomet in a lasting happiness.' Thus that well-being after death, that the Koran promises him, sustains the Muslim, conquered but proud in his misfortune.*

*I saw a respectable old man, whose taste and manners proclaimed his superior status, I saw him....coolly dig a hole in the shifting sand before him, deep enough to bury himself alive: doubtless he did not wish to die except by his own hands. He lay down on his back in this sure and mournful tomb, and his friends, calling on God in suppliant prayer, covered him completely with sand, and then stamped on the dust which served him as a shroud, probably with the aim of hastening the duration of his suffering.*

*This scene, which made my heart thud, and which I have only feebly depicted, took place during the execution of the groups distributed among the dunes. At last, of all those prisoners, the only ones left were those standing near the pool of water. Our soldiers had exhausted their cartridges; they had to finish off the prisoners with bayonets and knives. I could not stand the dreadful sight; I fled, pale and ready to faint. The officers told me that night that those unfortunates, yielding to that irresistible natural urge to avoid death, even when they no longer hoped to escape it, flung themselves on top of one another, and received in their limbs the blows directed at their hearts which would have instantly ended their lives. They made, since it must be said, a dreadful pyramid, of dead and dying pouring out blood, and it was necessary to drag away the corpses of those already expired in order to reach the wretches who, sheltered by this awful, appalling rampart, had not yet been stabbed. The depiction is exact and faithful, and the memory makes my hand tremble which cannot describe the totality of the horror.'*

The part of Napoleon's life which contrasts with such pages explains the remoteness one feels from him.

Guided by the monks from the monastery of Jaffa to the sands south-west of the town, I made a tour of the burial site, once heaped with corpses, today a pyramid of remains; I walked among pomegranate trees burdened with ruby red fruit, while round me the first swallows, arrived from Europe, skimmed that fatal ground.

Heaven punishes violations of human rights: it sends the plague; it does not wreak total havoc in one go. Bourrienne criticizes the error of historians who place the scene depicted in *The Plague-Victims of Jaffa* during the first French entry to that town; it only took place after the return from Saint-Jean d'Acre. Several army officers have previously assured me that the scene was pure fiction; Bourrienne confirms this information:

*'The beds of the plague-stricken,' Napoleon's secretary informs us, 'were on the right on entering the first room. I walked beside the general; I confirm that I did not see him touch any of the plague-victims...He traversed the rooms rapidly, lightly tapping the yellow flap of his boot with the riding crop he held in his hand. While walking with long strides he uttered these words: "...I must return to Egypt to save her from the enemy who will soon arrive."'*

In the major-general's official report of the 29th of May, not a word is said about plague-victims, the visit to the hospital, or the touching of plague-sufferers.

What becomes of Gros' fine painting? It remains a masterpiece of art.

Saint Louis, less favored by painters, was more heroic in action: *'The good king, gentle and debonair, when he saw this, felt great pity in his heart, and set all other things aside for now, and had ditches dug in the fields and dedicated a cemetery there on behalf of the legate...the king helped inter the dead with his own hands. There was scarcely anyone who would give a helping hand. The king came, every morning of the five days it took to inter the dead, after mass, to the place, and said to his people: "Let us go and bury the martyrs who have suffered for Our Lord, and not weary of doing so, for they have suffered more than we have."* There, were present, in ceremonial habits, the Archbishop of Tyre and the Bishop of Damietta and their clergy who performed the service for the dead. But they held their noses because of the stench; though good King Louis was not seen by anyone to hold his nose, so steadfastly and devotedly did he act.'

Bonaparte laid siege to Saint-Jean-d'Acre. Blood was shed at Cana, which witnessed the healing of the nobleman's son by Christ; at Nazareth, which saw the Savior's peaceful childhood; at Thabor, which saw the transfiguration and where Peter said: *'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles.'* It was from Mount Thabor that the order of day was dispatched to all the troops occupying Sour (the ancient Tyre), Caesarea, *the Cataracts of the Nile, the Delta mouths, Alexandria and the shores of the Red Sea*, which bear the ruins of Kolsum and Arsinoe. Bonaparte was charmed with these names which he delighted in placing together.

In this country of miracles, Kléber and Murat renewed the feats of arms performed by Tancred and Rinaldo; they scattered the population of Syria, seized the Pasha of Damascus' camp, saw the Jordan, and the Sea of Galilee, and took possession of Scafet, ancient Bethulia. – Bonaparte remarked that the inhabitants pointed out the place where Judith killed Holofernes.

The Arab children of the mountains of Judea taught me the surest of traditions when they shouted in French to me: *'Forward march!'* *'These same deserts,'* as I say in *Les Martyrs*, *'have seen the armies of Sesostri, Cambyzes, Alexander and Caesar march by: centuries to come, you will send here armies no less numerous, warriors no less celebrated!'*

After tracking the still recent footsteps of Bonaparte in the East, I returned when there was nothing more to be seen of his route. Saint-Jean was defended by Djezzar the Butcher. Bonaparte wrote to him from Jaffa on the 9th of March 1799: *'Since my entry into Egypt, I have made known to you on various occasions that my intention was not to make war on you, and that my sole aim was to pursue the Mamelukes....I will be marching in a few days' time to Saint-Jean-d'Acre. But, what reason do I have to waste years of my life on an old man I do not know? What are a few leagues more given the countries I have conquered?'*

Djezzar was unmoved by these attentions: the old tiger defied the claws of his young adversary. He was surrounded by servants mutilated by his own hands. *'They say Djezzar is a cruel Bosnian,'* he said of himself (narrative of General Sébastiani) *'a person of no account; but I need no one to wait on me and*

*they seek me out. I was born poor; my father left me nothing but his courage. I have risen by hard labor; but that does not make me proud: since all things come to an end, today perhaps, or tomorrow, Djezzar will come to an end, not because he is old, as his enemies declare, but because God wills it so. The King of France, who was powerful, is no more; Nebuchadnezzar was killed by a gnat, etc.'*

At the end of sixty-one days of digging, Napoleon was forced to lift the siege of Saint-Jean d'Acre. Our soldiers, leaving their mud huts, ran after the enemy cannon balls that our canons were returning to them. Our troops, forced to defend themselves from the town and the English ships at anchor, delivered nine assaults and scaled the ramparts on five occasions. At the time of the Crusades, there was, according to Rigord, a tower at Saint-Jean-d'Acre called the *accursed*. This tower had been replaced perhaps by the large tower which caused Bonaparte's attack to fail. Our soldiers leapt down into the streets, where they fought hand to hand throughout the night. General Lannes was wounded in the head, Colbert in the legs: among the dead were Rambaut, Venoux and General Bon, who carried out the massacre of the prisoners at Jaffa. Kléber said of this siege: '*The Turks defended themselves like Christians, the French attacked like Turks*': a criticism made by a soldier who had no love for Napoleon. Bonaparte left proclaiming that he had razed Djezzar's palace and bombarded the town until not a stone was left standing, that Djezzar had retreated with his men to one of the coastal forts, that he was grievously wounded, and that the frigates had, on Napoleon's orders, seized thirty Syrian boats full of troops.

Sir Sydney Smith and Phelippeaux, an *émigré* artillery officer, assisted Djezzar: the former had been a prisoner in the Temple, the latter a companion of Napoleon's studies.

Long ago the flower of chivalry, under Philippe-Auguste had perished before Saint-Jean-d'Acre. My compatriot, Guillaume le Breton, tells us so in twelfth-century Latin verse: '*Throughout the kingdom one could scarcely find a place in which someone did not have a reason for tears; so great was the disaster that sent our heroes to the grave, when they were struck down by death in the town of Ascalon (Saint-Jean-d'Acre).*'

Bonaparte was a great magician, but he lacked the power to transform General Bon, killed at Ptolemais, into Raoul, Sire de Coucy, who, expiring at the foot of the ramparts of that town, wrote to La Dame de Fayel: '*Dead through loyally loving his lover.*'

Napoleon could not have easily ignored the song of the *canteors*, he who was nourished on Saint-Jean-d'Acre as well as other tales. In the last days of his life, under a sky that is not ours, he was pleased to divulge what he intended in Syria, if that is he was not inventing plans after the fact, and amusing himself by building a fabulous future he wished us to believe in, on a past reality. '*Master of Ptolemais,*' we recount those revelations of St Helena, '*Napoleon founded an Empire in the East, and France was left to her fate. He flew to Damascus, Aleppo, and the Euphrates. The Syrian Christians, even those of Armenia, would have flocked to him. The nations were weakened. The remnants of the Mamelukes, the Desert Arabs of Egypt, the Druze of Lebanon, the Mutualis or oppressed Mahometans of the sect of Ali, were able to join the army which was master of Syria, and the tremor communicated itself to all Arabia. The provinces of the Ottoman Empire that spoke Arabic hailed the great change and waited on a man of happy destiny; he could be found on the Euphrates, in mid-summer, with a hundred thousand auxiliaries and a reserve of twenty-five thousand Frenchmen whom he had transferred successively from Egypt. He would have reached Constantinople and India and changed the face of the world.*'

Before retreating from Saint-Jean-d'Acre, the French army touched at Tyre: abandoned by Solomon's fleets and the Macedonian phalanxes, Tyre guarded only the imperturbable solitude of Isaiah; a solitude in which *the dumb dogs refuse to bark*.

The siege of Saint-Jean-d'Acre was raised on the 20th of May 1799. Arriving in Jaffa on the 27th, Bonaparte was forced to continue his retreat. There were about thirty or forty plague-sufferers, a number which Napoleon belittled to seven, who could not be moved; not wishing to leave them behind him, for fear, he said, of exposing them to the cruelty of the Turks, he proposed that Desgenettes administer a strong dose of opium to them. Desgenettes gave his well-known reply: *'My trade is to heal men, not kill them.'* *'No one administered opium to them,'* says Monsieur Thiers, *'and his comment has merely served to propagate an unworthy calumny which is today discredited.'*

Is it a calumny? Is it discredited? That is something I am unable to affirm in as peremptory a manner as the brilliant historian; his reasoning amounts to this: that Bonaparte did not poison the plague-sufferers because he only proposed to poison them.

Desgenettes, from a humble family of Breton gentlemen, is still held in veneration by the Syrian Arabs, and Wilson says that his name ought to be written solely in letters of gold.

Bourrienne wrote ten whole pages maintaining the poisoning occurred against those who denied it: *'I cannot say that I saw the dose being given,'* he says, *'I would be lying; but I am quite positive that the decision was made, and must have been made after deliberation, that the order was issued and that the plague-victims are dead. How should something which the headquarters staff regarded, from the moment of our departure from Jaffa the following day, as a certain fact, which we spoke of as an appalling misfortune, have become an atrocity invented to do harm to a hero's reputation?'*

Napoleon never erased a single one of his faults; like a tender father, he preferred those of his children who were ugliest. The French army was less indulgent than the admiring historians; it largely believed the poisoning, not merely of a few sick men, but of several hundred. Robert Wilson, in his History of the English Expedition to Egypt, was first to advance the more serious allegation; he affirmed that it relied on the views of French officers who were prisoners of the English in Syria. Bonaparte gave the lie to Wilson, who replied that he had merely told the truth. Wilson is that same Major-General seconded by Great Britain to the Russian Army during the retreat from Moscow; he has since had the good fortune to contribute to Monsieur de Lavalette's escape. He raised a Legion opposing the legitimacy during the Spanish War of 1823, defended Bilbao and returned Monsieur Desbassyns, who had been forced to anchor in the port, to his brother-in-law, Monsieur de Villèle. Robert Wilson's version then from various points of view carries great weight. The majority of accounts are agreed concerning the fact of the poisoning. Monsieur de Las Cases admits that the rumor of poisoning was believed by the Army. Bonaparte, who became more truthful in captivity, told Mr. Warden and the doctor O'Meara that, in the state the plague-sufferers enjoyed, he would himself have found in opium a release from his pain, and that he would have administered the drug to his own son. Walter Scott recounts all that has been churned out on this subject; but he rejects the version that swells the numbers of condemned patients, maintaining that such a mass poisoning could not have been executed successfully; he adds that Sir Robert met the *seven* Frenchmen mentioned by Bonaparte in the hospital at Jaffa. Walter Scott maintains the greatest

impartiality; he defends Napoleon as he would have defended Alexander from the accusations with which his memory has been charged.

The retreat beneath the Syrian sun was marked by a wretchedness that recalls the miseries of our soldiers during the retreat from Moscow in the depths of frost: Miot says *'In the huts on the sea shore there were still some unfortunates waiting for transport. One soldier among them was attacked by plague, and, in the delirium that sometimes accompanies its agonizing symptoms, he believed doubtless, seeing the army marching to the sound of the drum, that he was about to be abandoned; his imagination conjured up the extent of his misery if he should fall into the hands of the Arabs. One assumes that it was this fear that agitated him so greatly and suggested to him the idea of following the troops: he took up his haversack, on which his head had been lying, and placing it on his shoulders made the effort to rise. The poison of the dreadful epidemic which coursed through his veins robbed him of strength, and after a few steps he fell back face upwards on the sand. This tumble increased his terror, and, having spent a while, with wandering eyes, watching the column of marching troops, he rose a second time no more successfully; at his third attempt he succumbed, and falling nearer the sea, remained where fate had chosen the site for his grave. This soldier's gaze was horrific; the chaos of his babbling speech, his grief-stricken face, his eyes open and staring, his tattered clothes, revealed all that is most hideous of death. His eyes fixed on the marching troops, he had lacked the sense, simple for someone calm, to turn his head to the side: he had seen Kléber's division and that of the cavalry which were leaving Tantura after the others, and the hope of being saved might perhaps have prolonged his life.'*

When our soldiers, who had remained impassive, saw one of their unfortunate comrades following them like a drunken man, stumbling, falling, rising again, and then falling forever, they said; *'He has gone into quarters.'*

A single page from Bourrienne will realize the scene:

*'A devouring thirst,' the Memoirs state, 'the total lack of water, excessive heat, and the wearisome march through burning sands demoralized the men, and caused the cruelest selfishness, the most grievous indifference, to defeat every generous feeling. I saw the stretchers reserved for amputee officers, organized by the transport officers, who had even been paid money in recompense for their efforts, thrown aside. I saw the amputees themselves, the wounded, the plague-stricken, or those only suspected of being so, abandoned amongst the crops. The march was illuminated by torches lit in order to burn the little towns, markets, villages, hamlets, and rich harvest with which the earth was covered. The countryside was all ablaze. Those who been ordered to preside over these disasters seemed, by extending desolation everywhere, to seek revenge for their setbacks and to find solace for their suffering. We were surrounded only by the dying, by looters and by incendiaries. The dying, abandoned by the edge of the track cried in feeble voices; 'I am not plague-stricken, I am only wounded; and, in order to convince the passers-by, one saw them tear open their wounds or make fresh ones. No one believed them; they said: He's done for; they passed by, wavered a moment, then all was forgotten. The sun, in all his glory in that beautiful sky, was obscured by the smoke from our continual incendiaries. We had the sea on our right; on our left and behind us was the desert we were creating; in front the privation and suffering that awaited us.'*

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 17

#### Return to Egypt – The Conquest of Upper Egypt

*‘He left; he has arrived; he has scattered the storms; his return has made them vanish into the desert.’* So sang the conqueror repulsed, in his own praise, on re-entering Cairo: he carried the world with hymns.

During his absence, Desaix had achieved Upper Egypt’s surrender. In ascending the Nile one encounters ruins to which the language of Bossuet concedes all their grandeur and augments it. *‘They discovered,’* says the author of the Universal History, *‘at Saïd, temples and palaces almost completely untouched, with innumerable columns and statues. There they particularly admired a palace whose remains seem only to have survived to efface the glory of all the greatest works. Four avenues, stretching as far as the eye can see, and bordered on either side by sphinxes of a material as rare as their grandeur is remarkable, serve to arrive at four porticoes whose height astonishes the eye. What a magnificent expanse! Those who described this prodigious edifice for us have still not had long enough to make a complete tour of it, and are not even certain of having seen the larger part of it; but all those who have seen it are astonished. One room, which apparently constituted the center of this superb palace, was supported on six and twenty columns of six arm-lengths around, tall in proportion, and intermingled with obelisks that the many centuries have not been able to fell. Even the colors, that is to say those things which soonest reveal the power of time, still survive among the ruins of that admirable edifice, and retain their vivacity: Egypt knew how to give such immortal character to all her works! Now that the name of King Louis XIV penetrates to the least known regions of the world, would it not be a worthy object of his noble curiosity to discover the beauties that the Thebaid conceals in its deserts? What beauties might one not find if one could reach the royal city, given one can discover such marvelous things so far from it! The Roman Empire, despairing of equaling the Egyptians, thought it enough for its grandeur to borrow their royal monuments.’*

Napoleon charged himself with executing the advice Bossuet gave Louis XIV. *‘Thebes,’* says Monsieur Denon, who accompanied Desaix’s expedition, *‘that abandoned city which the imagination only glimpses through the mists of time, was nevertheless so gigantic a phantom that the soldiers halted on seeing it, of their own accord, and clapped their hands. Amongst the obliging enthusiasm of the soldiers, I found knees to serve me for a table, and bodies to give me shade....At the cataracts of the Nile, our soldiers, continually fighting the beys and undergoing incredible hardships, amused themselves, by establishing in the village of Syene fixed price tailor’s shops, goldsmiths, barbers, and caterers. Beneath a regimented alley of trees, they set up a military column with the inscription: Road to Paris...Descending the Nile once more, the army often had dealings with the Meccans. The Arab entrenchments were set on fire: they lacked water; they beat out the fire with their feet and hands; they stifled it with their bodies. They were seen, black and naked, running through the flames: a likeness of devils in Hell. I never saw it without a feeling of horror and admiration. There were moments of silence in which some voice could be heard; it was responded to by sacred chants and battle cries.’*

Those Arabs sang and danced like the Spanish soldiers and monks set alight at Saragossa; while the Russians burned Moscow; the kind of sublime madness that agitated Bonaparte, he communicated to his victims.

## BOOK XIX

### CHAPTER 18

The Battle of Aboukir – Napoleon's notes and letters – He returns to France – The 18th Brumaire

Napoleon back at Cairo wrote to General Dugua: *'Citizen Governor you must cut off Abdalla-Aga's head, that former Governor of Jaffa, held in the citadel. From what I am told he is a monster from whom the earth must be delivered. You must shoot the following, Hassan, Joussef, Ibrahim, Saleh, Mahamet, Bekir, Hadj-Saleh, Mustapha, Mahamed, all Mamelukes.'* He often repeated his orders against Egyptians who had spoken badly of the French: such was the situation that Bonaparte enacted a law; did even the rights of warfare allow him to sacrifice so many lives on the simple order given by a commander: you must shoot them? To the Sultan of Darfur he wrote: *'I wish you to send me two thousand male slaves over sixteen years old.'* He delighted in slaves.

An Ottoman fleet of hundred vessels anchored at Aboukir and disembarked an army: Murat, supported by General Lannes, drove it into the sea; Bonaparte reported, concerning this success, to the Directory: *'The bay whose currents last year bore the corpses of English and French is today covered with those of our enemies.'* One grows as tired of marching through these mounting victories as through the shimmering dunes of those deserts.

The following note strikes the spirit mournfully: *'I am little pleased, Citizen General, with the sum of your activities during the action which recently took place. You received the order to take yourself off to Cairo and have done nothing about it. Any amount of events which occur should never prevent a soldier obeying an order, and skill in warfare consists in simplifying those difficulties which may render an operation awkward, and not in failing to execute it.'*

Ungrateful already, this rude instruction from Bonaparte was addressed to Desaix who offered, while leading his brave men through Upper Egypt, as many examples of humanity as courage, marching in his horse's footsteps, chatting about ruins, missing his country, sparing women and children, admired by the native population who called him the *Just Sultan*; to that Desaix killed later at Marengo in the charge which made the First Consul the master of Europe. The character of the man shows through Napoleon's note: dominating and jealous; it identifies the trait that afflicts all famous men, those who create destiny, those to whom is granted the word that lingers and compels; and without that power of command could Bonaparte have carried all before him?

Ready to leave the ancient lands where humanity once cried out in death: *'You powers that dispense life to men receive me and grant me a place among the immortal gods!'* Bonaparte only considered his future on earth: he sent warnings to the Governors of the Île de France and the Île de Bourbon via the Red Sea; he sent greetings to the Sultan of Morocco and the Bey of Tripoli; he informed them of his fond concern for the caravans and pilgrims of Mecca; Napoleon at the same time sought to deter the Grand Vizier from the invasion that the Porte intended, assuring him that he was as ready to conquer all, as to enter into negotiations about all.

One thing would have brought little honor to our character, if our imaginativeness and love of novelty had not been more to blame than the loss of our national sense of fair play; the French on the Egyptian



expedition felt enraptured, and did not notice that they were injuring both honesty and political justice: completely at peace with France's oldest ally, we attacked them, stole from them their fertile Nile province, without a declaration of war, like the Algerians who, in one of their algarades, seized Marseilles and Provence. When the Porte armed itself for legitimate defence, proud of our notable pre-emption, we asked them what they were at, why they were angry; we declared that we had taken up arms in order to police the region, and drive out the brigands and Mamelukes who held their Pasha prisoner. Bonaparte informed the Grand Vizier; *'How can Your Excellency not feel that every Frenchman killed is one more ally lost to the Porte? As for me, I will consider the finest day of my life to be that on which I may contribute to ending a war at once impolitic and pointless.'* Bonaparte wished to leave: so the war was pointless and impolitic! The former monarchy however was as guilty as the Republic: the archives of its foreign affairs contain various plans for French colonies in Egypt; Leibnitz himself had suggested an Egyptian colony to Louis XIV. Indeed the English themselves only value affirmative politics, that of self-interest; fidelity to treaties and moral scruples seem to them to be puerile.

At last the hour chimed: brought to a halt at the eastern frontiers of Asia, Bonaparte soon left to seize the European scepter, then to seek in the north, by another road, the gateway to the Himalayas and the splendors of Kashmir. His last letter to Kléber, dated from Alexandria, on the 22nd of August 1799, is quite excellent and unites reason, experience and authority. The conclusion of the letter achieves serious and profound pathos.

*'You will find enclosed, Citizen General, an order to take command as head of the army. The fear that the English fleet may reappear at any moment has brought forward my setting sail by two or three days.'*

*I am taking with me Generals Berthier, Andréossi, Murat, Lannes and Marmont and citizens Monge and Berthollet.*

*You will find enclosed the English newspapers and those from Frankfurt up to the 10th of June. You will see that we have lost Italy, and that Mantua, Turin and Tortona are under siege. I have room for hope that the first of these will hold out until the end of November. I hope, if fortune smiles on me, to arrive in Europe before the beginning of October.'*

Specific instructions follow.

*'You will appreciate as well as I do how important the possession of Egypt is to France: this Turkish Empire, which threatens destruction on all sides, is now collapsing, and the evacuation of Egypt would be all the greater a misfortune, in that we would see in our day this beautiful province fall into different European hands.'*

*The news of the successes or defeats that the Republic may experience must also enter significantly into your calculations.....*

*Citizen General, you are aware of how I view the internal politics of Egypt: whatever you do, the Christians will be our friends. They must be prevented from being too arrogant, lest the Turks display the same fanaticism towards us that they do towards the Christians, which would render them irreconcilable to our presence.....*

*I have already asked several times for a troupe of actors; I will take especial care to send you one. The thing is very important to the Army, and in starting to change the customs of the country.*

*The important position you will occupy as commander will allow you finally to deploy the talents which nature has given you. What happens here will be of great interest, and the results will be immense as far as commerce and civilization are concerned: this will be the epoch from which the great revolutions will date.*

*Accustomed to view the recompense for life's pains and efforts in the light of posterity, I am leaving Egypt with the greatest of regrets. Only the interests of our country, its glory, obedience, and the exceptional events which have happened, have decided my passage through the enemy squadrons in order to return to Europe. I will be with you in heart and spirit. Your successes will be as dear to me as those I might achieve in person, and I will regard those days as ill employed on which I do not do something for the army whose command I leave you, and so consolidate the magnificent edifice whose foundations have been laid.*

*The army I entrust you with is composed entirely of my children; I have had at all times, even in the worst troubles, tokens of their affection. Maintain those sentiments, and you will owe it to the esteem and quite particular friendship I have for you and the true affection I bear them.*

*BONAPARTE.'*

No warrior has ever achieved a similar tone of voice; it is Napoleon who concludes it; the Emperor, who follows, will of a surety be more astonishing still: but how much more detestable! His voice will no longer possess the tones of youth: time, despotism, the intoxication of success, will alter it.

Bonaparte would have been deeply to be pitied if he had been forced, in accordance with the ancient Egyptian law, to clasp in his embrace for three days the *children* whose death he had caused. He dreamed of providing, for the soldiers whom he left exposed to the heat of the sun, those entertainments that Captain Parry employed twenty years later for his sailors in the freezing polar nights. He left his Egyptian legacy to his brave successor, who was soon to be assassinated, and slunk away furtively, as Caesar saved himself by swimming, in the port of Alexandria. That queen whom the poet called a *fatal prodigy*, Cleopatra, did not await Napoleon; he journeyed to the secret rendezvous assigned to him by Fate, another faithless power. After having plunged into the Orient, the source of marvelous renown, he returned to us, without however having been seen in Jerusalem, just as he never entered Rome. The Jew who cried: 'Woe! Woe,' wandered about the holy city without penetrating the eternal tabernacle. A poet, escaping from Alexandria, was last to board the risk-bound frigate. Impregnated by the miracles of Judea, having appreciated the tomb in the Pyramids, Bonaparte crossed the sea, heedless of enemy ships and the deep: all things were fordable by this giant, whether events or waves.

Napoleon takes the route I followed: he skirts Africa faced with contrary winds; at the end of twenty-one days he doubles Cape Bon; he gains the coast of Sardinia, is forced to anchor at Ajaccio, casts his eyes on his place of birth, receives some money from Cardinal Fesch, and re-embarks; he comes across the English fleet which does not pursue him. On the 8th of October, he enters the harbor of Fréjus, not far

from the Gulf of Juan where he would become manifest on a second terrible occasion. He goes ashore, departs, arrives at Lyons, takes La Route Bourbonnais, and enters Paris on the 16th of October. All seem opposed to him, Barras, Sieyès, Bernadotte, Moreau; and all these opponents come to serve him as if by a miracle. The conspiracy is hatched; the government is transferred to Saint-Cloud. Bonaparte wants to harangue the Council of Elders: he is agitated, he stammers out brothers in arms, volcanoes, victory, Caesar; he is called a Cromwell, a tyrant, a hypocrite: he wishes to accuse and is accused; he says he is accompanied by the god of war and the goddess of fortune; he withdraws shouting: '*Whoever loves me follow me!*' His arrest is demanded; Lucien, President of the Council of the Five Hundred, resigns so as not to put Napoleon beyond the law. He draws his sword and swears to pierce his brother's breast, if he should ever attempt to strike a blow at liberty. They talk about having this deserter shot, this flouter of the medical code, this plague-carrier, and they crown him. Murat makes the representatives leap from the windows; the 18th of Brumaire is accomplished; Consular government is born, and freedom dies.

So absolute change is brought about in society: the man of the last century departs the stage: the man of the new century makes his entrance. Washington, at the end of his prodigious achievements, yields his place to Napoleon, who begins his. On the 9th of November the President of the United States closes the year 1799: the First Consul of the French Republic opens the year 1800:

*'A great destiny commences, a great destiny is completed.'*

CORNEILLE.

It was across these immense events that the first part of my Memoirs, that you have read, were written; just as a modern text desecrates some ancient manuscript. I told of my despondency and obscurity in London against the background of Napoleon's brilliant rise; the sound of his footsteps mingled with the silence of mine on my solitary walks; his name pursued me into those little rooms where were to be found the sad poverty of my companions in misfortune, and the joyous distress or, as our former language would have said, the *mirthful* misery of Peltier. Napoleon was my age: both of us leaving the womb of the army, he won a hundred battles while I yet languished in the obscurity of the *Emigration* which was the pedestal of his fortune. Left so far behind him, could I ever rejoin him? Yet nonetheless while he was dictating the law to monarchs, while he was crushing their armies and making their blood spurt at his feet, while flag in hand, he crossed the bridges at Arcole and Lodi, while he triumphed at the Pyramids, would I have given for all those victories a single one of those forgotten hours spent in England in a little unknown town? Oh, the magic of youth!

**End of Book XIX**

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 1

The position of France on Bonaparte's return from the Egyptian Campaign

I left England some months after Napoleon had left Egypt; we returned to France at almost the same moment, he from Memphis; I from London: he had seized towns and kingdoms; his hands were full of powerful realities; I had still only captured chimaeras.

What had taken place in Europe during Napoleon's absence?

The war in Italy had recommenced, in the Kingdom of Naples and in Sardinia; Rome and Naples were occupied for a while; Pius VI, a prisoner, was brought to die in France; and a treaty of alliance was concluded between the cabinets of Petersburg and London.

There was a second continental coalition against France. On the 8th of April 1799, the Congress of Rastatt broke up, and the French plenipotentiaries were assassinated. Suvorov, arriving in Italy, beats the French at Cassano. The citadel of Milan surrenders to the Russian general. One of our armies, commanded by General Macdonald, forced to evacuate Naples, survives with difficulty. Masséna defends Switzerland.

Mantua succumbs after a blockade of seventy-two days and a siege of twenty. On the 15th of October 1799, General Joubert is killed at Novi, leaving the field free for Bonaparte; he would have been destined to play the role of the latter: alas for those crossed by fatal misfortune, witness Hoche, Moreau and Joubert! Twenty thousand English descending on Den Helder, where the Dutch fleet in 1794 had been partly frozen in the ice, and our cavalry charged and took the vessels, remain there ineffectually. The twenty-eight thousand Russians, to which battle and exhaustion had reduced Suvorov's army, traversing the Saint-Gothard on the 24th of September, are engaged in the Valley of the Reuss. Masséna saves France at the battle of Zurich. Suvorov, re-enters Germany, blames the Austrians and retires to Poland. Such was the position of France when Bonaparte re-appeared, overthrew the Directory and established the Consulate.

Before continuing further, I will mention something of which the reader will already be aware: I am not writing a detailed life of Bonaparte; I am sketching an abridgement and summary of his actions; I depict his battles, I do not describe them; one can find such descriptions everywhere, from Pommereul, who gave us his Italian Campaign, to our usual critics and commentators on battles in which they have fought, to the foreign tacticians, English, Russian, German, Italian and Spanish. Napoleon's general bulletins and his secret dispatches provide the very uncertain thread of these narrations. The works of General Jomini furnish a better source of information: the author is especially credible since he has demonstrated his knowledge in his *Traité de la grande tactique* and his *Traité des grands opérations militaires*. An admirer of Napoleon to the point of bias, attached to Marshal Ney's staff, he provides a critical military history of the Revolutionary campaigns: he saw with his own eyes the war in Germany, Prussia, Poland and Russia up to the taking of Smolensk; he was present in Saxony in the fighting of 1813; from there he subsequently went over to the Alliance; he was condemned to death by a council of war of Bonaparte's, and at the same moment named as aide-de-camp to the Emperor Alexander. Attacked by General Sarrazin

in his *Histoire de la guerre de Russie et d'Allemagne*, Jomini replied. Jomini had at his disposal material filed at the War Ministry and in other royal archives; he was a thorough witness of our army's retreat, having served to lead their advance. His narrative is lucid and threaded by fine and judicious comments. Pages have often been borrowed from him without acknowledgement; but I am no copyist nor have I any ambition to claim the renown of being an unknown Caesar, lacking only a helmet in order to subjugate the world once more. If I had chosen to assist the memory of the veterans, by maneuvering around maps, jogging around battlefields filled with peaceful crops, making extracts from various documents, piling up description on ever-identical description, I would have accumulated volume after volume, I would have acquired a reputation for hard work, but at the risk of burying beneath my labors, myself, my readers, and my hero. Being only a humble soldier, I bow before the science of Vegetius; I have not assumed my public to be officers on half-pay; and the lowliest corporal knows more about it than I do.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 2

The Consulate: A fresh invasion of Italy – The Thirty-Day Campaign – The Victory of Hohenlinden –  
The Peace of Luneville

To make certain of the position he occupied, Napoleon needed to surpass his own previous miracles.

From the 25th to the 30th of April 1800, the French cross the Rhine, Moreau at their head. The Austrian army beaten four times in eight days falls back on one side on Voralberg, and on the other on Ulm. Bonaparte crosses the Great Saint Bernard Pass on the 16th of May; and on the 20th the Little Saint Bernard, the Simplon, the Saint Gothard, the Mont Cenis, and the Mont Genève, are assaulted and carried; we penetrate Italy through three defiles, considered impregnable, with caves for bears, cliffs for eagles. The army seize Milan on the 2nd of June, and the Cisalpine Republic is re-organized; but Genoa is obliged to surrender after a memorable siege, withstood by Masséna.

The occupation of Pavia and the fortunate affair of Montebello precede the victory at Marengo.

A defeat begins that victory: Lannes' and Victor's exhausted corps cease fighting and abandon the ground; the battle begins again with four thousand infantrymen led by Desaix supported by Kellerman's cavalry brigade; Desaix is killed. Kellerman's charge decides success; on a day that serves to confirm Mélas' ordinariness.

Desaix, gentleman of Auvergne, second-lieutenant in the Breton regiment, aide-de-camp to General Victor de Broglie, commanded a division of Moreau's army in 1796, and went to the Orient with Bonaparte. His character was selfless, uncomplicated and easy-going. When the treaty of El-Arish released him, he was detained by Lord Keith in the lazaretto at Livorno. '*When the lights were extinguished,*' says Miot his companion on the voyage, '*our general told us stories of ghosts and brigands; he shared our pleasures and calmed our quarrels; he had a great love of women and only wished to earn their love through his love of glory.*' On disembarking in Europe, he received a letter from the First Consul summoning him to his side; it was waiting for him, and Desaix said; '*Poor Bonaparte is covered with glory, and he is not happy.*' Reading in the papers about the march of the army reserve, he wrote: '*He will leave us nothing to do.*' Bonaparte left him the task of winning him victory, and then dying.

Desaix was buried among the Alpine summits, at the hospice of Mont Saint-Bernard, as Napoleon was buried on the heights of St Helena.

Kléber, assassinated, met his death in Egypt on the same day that Desaix found his in Italy. After the departure of the commander-in-chief, Kléber with eleven thousand men defeated a hundred thousand Turks under the command of the Grand Vizier, at Heliopolis; an exploit with which Napoleon had nothing to compare.

On the 15th of June, the Convention of Alexandria was signed. The Austrians retreated to the left bank of the lower Po. The fate of Italy was decided in this campaign known as the Thirty Days.

The victory of Höchstadt won by Moreau appeased the spirit of Louis XIV. However the armistice between Germany and Italy, concluded after the battle of Marengo, was denounced on the 20th of October 1800.

The 3rd of December brought the victory of Hohenlinden in the midst of a snow-storm; a victory obtained yet again by Moreau, a great general commanded by another great genius. The compatriot of Du Guesclin marched on Vienna. At twenty-five leagues from that capital, he concluded the suspension of hostilities at Steyer, with Archduke Charles. After the battle of Pozzolo, and the crossing of the Mincio, the Adige and the Brenta, the Peace Treaty of Lunéville was signed, on the 9th of February 1801.

And it was scarcely nine months since Napoleon had been on the banks of the Nile! Nine months were enough for him to overthrow a popular revolution in France and crush the absolute monarchies of Europe.

I am not sure if it is to this period that one ought to attribute an anecdote found in informal memoirs, or even whether the anecdote is worth the trouble of recalling; but there is no lack of tales concerning Caesar: life is not all on one level, sometimes one rises, often one falls: Napoleon received into his bed, in Milan, an Italian girl, sixteen years old, lovely as the dawn; in the middle of the night he sent her away, just as he would have ordered a bouquet of flowers to be tossed from a window.

On another occasion, one of these spring flowers slipped into the same palace as he; she entered at three in the morning, kept the witching hour, and chanced her youth in the jaws of the lion; more benevolent on that day.

Those pleasures, far from representing love, had no real power over the man of death: he would have set fire to Persepolis on his own account, not for the joys of a courtesan. 'Francis I, 'says Tavannes, '*saw to business when he had finished with women: Alexander saw to women when he had finished with business.*'

Women in general, and mothers in particular, detested Bonaparte; they had little liking for him as women, since they were not liked: lacking delicacy, he insulted them, or only sought them out momentarily. He inspired a degree of imaginative passion after his fall: in those days, for a female heart, the poetry of destiny was less seductive than that of misfortune; there are flowers among the ruins.

Following the example of Saint-Louis' order of chivalry, the Legion of Honor is created: through that institution a ray of the old monarchy passes, and introduces a barrier to the new equality. The transfer of Turenne's remains to the Invalides brought Napoleon esteem; Captain Baudin's expedition carried his fame around the globe. All that might have harmed the First Consul failed: he defeats a plot by guilty parties on the 18th Vendémiaire and escapes *the Infernal machine* of the 3rd Nivôse; Pitt retires; Tsar Paul dies; Alexander succeeds him; Wellington has not yet come to notice. But India moves to take from us our control of the Nile; Egypt is attacked via the Red Sea, while the Capitan-Pasha lands there from the Mediterranean. Napoleon stirs Empires: all the earth is involved with him.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 3

The Peace of Amiens –The breaking of the Treaty – Bonaparte created Emperor

The peace preliminaries between France and England, agreed in London on the 1st of October 1801, were converted into a treaty at Amiens. The Napoleonic world was not yet fixed; its boundaries changed with the ebb and flow of the tide of our victories.

It was about then that the First Consul named Toussaint-Louverture Governor for life of Santa Domingo, and incorporated the Isle of Elba within France; but Toussaint, treacherously taken, was to die in a harsh fortress in the Jura, while Bonaparte provided himself with a prison at Porto-Ferrajo, in order to meet the needs of the Emperor of the world when he no should longer possess anywhere else.

On the 6th of May 1802, Napoleon is elected Consul for ten years, and shortly Consul for life. He finds himself cramped by the overriding domination that the peace with England has accorded him: without being embarrassed for a moment by the Treaty of Amiens, without a thought for the fresh wars into which his decision will plunge him, under the pretext of the non-evacuation of Malta, he annexes the provinces of Piedmont to the French State, and, because of the disturbances arising in Switzerland, occupies it. England breaks with us: that rupture takes place between the 13th and the 20th of March 1803, and on the 22nd of May the unofficial decree appears requiring the arrest of all English people trading or travelling in France.

Bonaparte invades the Electorate of Hanover on the 3rd of June: in Rome, I was then closing the eyes of a little-known woman.

On the 21st of March 1804 occurs the death of the Duc d'Enghien: I have described it to you. On the same day, the Civil Code or Code Napoléon is decreed in order to teach us to respect the law.

Forty days after the death of the Duc d'Enghien, on the 30th of April 1804, a member of the Tribunal named Curée presents a motion elevating Bonaparte to a position of supreme power, apparently because they are all dedicated to freedom: never has a more brilliant master been created at the suggestion of a more obscure slave.

The Senate (*Sénat Conservateur*) in its decree alters the Tribunal's suggestion. Bonaparte imitates neither Caesar nor Cromwell: more assured regarding the crown, he accepts it. On the 18th of May he is proclaimed Emperor at Saint-Cloud, in the rooms from which he had himself driven the people, in the place where Henri III was assassinated, Henrietta of England was poisoned, Marie-Antoinette gathered fugitive joys which led here to the scaffold, and from where Charles X left for his last exile.

The speeches of congratulation flowed. Mirabeau in 1790 had said: '*We provide a fresh example of that blind and unmotivated thoughtlessness which has led us, from age to age, into all the crises that have successively afflicted us. It seems that our eyes cannot be opened and that we have resolved to be, to the end of time, children who are sometimes rebels and always slaves.*'



The plebiscite of the 1st of December 1804 is presented to Napoleon; the Emperor replies: '*My descendants will command this throne for many years.*' When one beholds the illusions with which Providence cloaks the powerful, one is consoled by their short duration.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 4

#### Empire: The Coronation – The Kingdom of Italy

On the 2nd of December 1804 the consecration and coronation of the Emperor took place at Notre-Dame de Paris. The Pope uttered this prayer: *‘Eternal and Almighty God, who made Hazael Governor of Syria, and Jehu King of Israel, manifesting your will through the voice of the prophet Elijah; who equally anointed the heads of Saul and David with the sacred unction of kings, by the ministry of the prophet Samuel, pour the treasure of your grace and your blessings from my hands upon your servant Napoleon, so that despite our personal worthlessness, we may consecrate him Emperor today in your name.’* In 1797, Pius VII while still only Bishop of Imola had said: *‘Yes, my most dear friends, siate buoni cristiani, e sarete ottimi democrati (be good Christians and you will be the best of democrats). Moral virtue makes good democrats. The first Christians were animated by the spirit of democracy: God looked favorably on the works of Cato of Utica and the illustrious Republicans of Rome.’* Quo turbine fertur vita hominum: on what whirlwind is the life of man borne away?

On the 18th of March, the Emperor announced to the Senate that he was accepting the iron crown that had been offered to him by the electoral college of the Cisalpine Republic: he was at that time the secret instigator of the wish and the public object of the wish. Little by little all of Italy embraced the rule of law; he attached the country to his diadem, as in the sixteenth century the leaders in warfare placed a diamond instead of a buttonhole in their hat.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 5

#### The Invasion of Germany – Austerlitz – The Peace Treaty of Pressbourg – The Sanhedrin

Europe, wounded, wished to apply a bandage to the wound: Austria adheres to the treaty of Petersburg concluded between Great Britain and Russia. Alexander and the King of Prussia have a meeting at Potsdam, which furnishes Napoleon with a subject for ignoble jest. The Third Continental Coalition is constructed. These coalitions are constantly reborn out of defiance and fear; Napoleon delighted in storms: he profited from them.

He makes a dash from the coast of Boulogne where he has decreed a column be erected, and has threatened Albion with a flotilla. An army organized by Davout streams towards the River Rhine. On the 1st of October 1805, the Emperor harangues his one hundred and sixty thousand soldiers: his speed of movement disconcerts Austria. There is fighting at the Lech, at Wertingen, at Günzburg. On the 17th of October, Napoleon appears before Ulm; to Mack he issues the order: '*Lay down your arms!*' Mack and his thirty thousand men obey. Munich surrenders; the River Inn is passed, Salzburg taken, the Traun crossed. On the 13th of November, Napoleon enters one of those capitals he will re-visit time and time again: he traverses Vienna; chained by his own triumphs, he is drawn in their wake to the center of Moravia to meet the Russians. On the left Bohemia rises; on the right Hungary; Archduke Charles hastens to Italy. Prussia, entering into the Coalition clandestinely and not yet having declared war, sends its Minister Haugwitz to carry an ultimatum.

The morning of Austerlitz arrives, the 2nd of December 1805. The allies are waiting for a third Russian corps which is no more than eight day's march distant. Kutuzov maintains that the risk of battle must be evaded; Napoleon by his maneuvers forces the Russians to accept a fight: they are defeated. In less than two months the French, starting from the Channel, advancing beyond the capital of Austria, have wiped out Catherine's legions. The Prussian foreign minister came to congratulate Napoleon at his headquarters: '*Here we have,*' said the conqueror, '*a compliment whose destination fate has altered.*' Francis II presented himself in turn at the fortunate soldier's camp: '*I welcome you,*' Napoleon told him, '*in the only palace I have seen in the last two months.*' – '*You know how to take advantage of this dwelling so well,*' replied Francis, '*that it must please you.*' Is it worth the effort for equal powers to fight? An armistice is agreed. The Russians retreat in three columns, in stages, in the order decided by Napoleon. After the battle of Austerlitz, Bonaparte does scarcely anything but make mistakes.

The peace treaty of Pressburg is signed on the 26th of December 1805. Napoleon makes kings of the Elector of Bavaria and the Elector of Wurtemberg. The republics Bonaparte had created he destroyed in order to transform them into monarchies; and perversely according to this method, on the 27th of December, at the palace of Schonbrunn, he declared *that the dynasty of Naples had ceased to reign*; merely in order to replace it with his own: at the sound of his voice, kings entered or leapt from windows. The designs of Providence were no less fulfilled than those of Napoleon: one saw both God and man on the march together. After his victory, Bonaparte commanded the building of the bridge of Austerlitz in Paris: the heavens commanded Alexander to pass over it.

The war begun in the Tyrol was pursued, while it continued in Moravia. In the midst of prostrations, when you find someone standing you breathe once more: Hofer, the Tyrolean, did not capitulate like his master; but magnanimity moved Napoleon not a jot; it seemed stupidity to him or madness. The Austrian emperor abandoned Hofer. When I crossed Lake Garda, immortalized by Catullus and Virgil, I was shown the place where the warrior was shot: that taught me all I needed to know of the courage of the subject and the cowardice of the king.

On the 14th of January 1806, Prince Eugène married the daughter of the new king of Bavaria: thrones appeared on all sides in the family of the Corsican soldier. On the 20th of February the Emperor orders the restoration of the church of Saint-Denis; he dedicates the reconstructed vaults to be the tomb of the princes of his race, but Napoleon will not be buried there: man proposes his grave; God disposes.

Berg and Cleves are settled on Murat, the Two Sicilies on Joseph. A memory of Charlemagne comes to Napoleon's mind, and the University is re-established.

The Batavian Republic, driven to admiration of princes, sends a message on the 5th of June 1806 begging that Napoleon deign to grant it his brother Louis as king.

The idea of associating Batavia with France in the guise more or less of union arose from covetousness without rhyme or reason: it was to prefer a little cheese-making province to the advantages which would result from alliance with a great and friendly kingdom, while increasing to no purpose European fears and jealousies: it was to confirm the English in possession of India, while obliging them, for their security, to guard the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon which they seized as soon as we invaded Holland. The scene was set for endowing Prince Louis with the United Provinces: the Tuileries Palace was granted a re-enactment of Louis XIV's display of his grandson Philip V at Versailles. On the following day a gala lunch was held in the Salon de Diana. One of Queen Hortense's sons enters; Bonaparte says to him: 'Darling, repeat the fable you have learned, for us.' The child immediately proclaims: 'The frogs ask for a king,' and continues:

*The frogs, rendered weary  
Of their state of democracy,  
Made so much sound and fury  
Jove sent a king to them, to keep the peace.*

Sitting behind the new sovereign of Holland, the Emperor, as was a habit of his, pinched his ear: though he was at the pinnacle of society, he was not always the best of company.

On the 12th of July 1806 the Treaty of the Confederation of the Rhine is signed; sixteen German princes separating from the Empire, joining together and with France: Napoleon takes the title of Protector of the Confederation.

On the 20th of July a peace treaty between France and Russia is signed, Francis II, following the Confederation of the Rhine States, on the 6th of August renounces the title of Emperor Elect of Germany, and becomes hereditary Emperor of Austria: the Holy Roman Empire collapses. That immense event was

hardly noticed; after the French Revolution, everything seemed trivial; after the fall of Clovis' throne, one scarcely heard the sound of the German throne disintegrating.

At the start of our Revolution, Germany had a multitude of sovereigns. Two principal monarchies tended to attract the various powers to them: Austria created by time, Prussia by a single man. Two religions divided the country and relied, for better rather than worse, on the tenets of the Treaty of Westphalia. Germany dreamed of political unity; but Germany lacked the political training to achieve freedom, as Italy lacked the military training to achieve that same freedom. Germany, with its ancient traditions, resembled those basilicas with multiple bell towers, which sin against the rules of art, but represent the majesty of religion and the power of the centuries no less.

The Confederation of the Rhine was a great unfinished work, which demanded, much of the time, special knowledge of the rights and interests of its peoples; it suddenly fell to pieces in the mind of him who conceived it: of that profound scheme, only the fiscal and military workings survived. Bonaparte, his first designs of genius spent, saw only money and soldiers; the tax-collector and the recruiting-officer took the place of greatness. The Michelangelo of politics and war, he left portfolios full of vast sketches.

Disturber of everything, Napoleon conceived a grand Sanhedrin about this time: that assembly did not award Jerusalem to him; but, by a series of consequences, it allowed world finance to fall into Jewish hands, and because of that allowed a fatal subversion of the social economy.

The Marquis of Lauderdale came to Paris to replace Mr. Fox in the pending negotiations between France and England; diplomatic discussions which boil down to this comment of the English Ambassador to Monsieur de Talleyrand: 'It is muck' (I employ the more polite expression) 'in a silk stocking.'

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 6

The Fourth Coalition – Prussia vanishes – The Berlin Decree – War against Russia continues in Poland –  
Tilsit – A plan to divide the world between Napoleon and Alexander – Peace

During the course of 1806, the Fourth Coalition breaks up. Napoleon leaves Saint-Cloud, arrives at Mainz, and removes the enemy's supplies from Saalburg. At Saalfeld, Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia is killed. At the twin battles of Auerstadt and Jena, on the 14th of October, Prussia vanishes; I no longer found it on my return from Jerusalem.

The Prussian *Bulletin* says it all in a sentence: '*The King's army has been beaten. The king and his brothers still live.*' The Duke of Brunswick soon died of his wounds: in 1792, his proclamation had roused France; he had saluted me on the road when, a poor soldier, I went to join the brothers of Louis XIV.

The Prince of Orange, and Mollendorf, with several other officers trapped in Halle, were granted permission to retreat by virtue of its capitulation.

Mollendorf, who was more than eighty years old, had been the companion of Frederick, who praised him in his *History of his Time*, as did Mirabeau in his *Secret History*. He was present at our disaster of Rosbach and was witness to our triumph at Jena: thus the Duke of Brunswick saw Assas die at Klosterkamp, and Ferdinand of Prussia fall at Auerstadt, guilty only of his hatred, born of a generous spirit, for the murder of the Duc d'Enghien. Those spectres from the old wars of Hanover and Silesia had endured the cannon fire of our two Empires: but the powerless shadows of the past could not prevent the march of the future; between the smoke from our old campfires and our new, they had appeared, and vanished.

Erfurt capitulates; Leipzig is seized by Davout; the passages of the Elbe are forced; Spandau yields; at Potsdam, Bonaparte takes Frederick's sword captive. On the 27th of October 1806, the great King of Prussia, hears soldiers marching through the dust surrounding his empty palaces in Berlin, in a manner which reveals they are foreign grenadiers: Napoleon has arrived. While a monument to philosophy fell beside the Spree, I, in Jerusalem, was visiting an imperishable monument to religion.

Stettin, and Custrin surrender; there is a great victory at Lübeck; the capital of Wagria is carried by assault; Blücher, destined to reach Paris twice, falls into our hands. It is the story of Holland and its forty-six towns, captured during a campaign in 1672 by Louis XIV.

On the 21st of November the Berlin Decree establishing the Continental System appeared, a far-reaching decree which placed England under total ban, and was on the verge of being fulfilled; the decree seemed foolish, its results were immense. Regardless of the fact that, on the one hand, the continental blockade created the manufacturing industries of France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, on the other it spread English trade throughout the globe: by embarrassing the governments within our alliance, it appalled industrial interests, fomented hatred, and contributed to the rupture between the Ministry of the Tuileries and that of St Petersburg. The blockade then was a questionable act: Richelieu would not have initiated it.

Silesia, following quickly on Frederick's other States, is overrun. The war between France and Prussia has begun on the 9th of October: in seventeen days our soldiers, like a host of birds of prey, have glided through the defiles of Franconia, and over the waters of the Saal and Elbe; the 6th of December finds them before the Vistula. Since the 29th of December, Murat has been garrisoned in Warsaw, from which the Russians, who have arrived too late to aid the Prussians, have retreated. The Elector of Saxony, promoted to being a Napoleonic king, accedes to the Confederation of the Rhine, and agrees in case of war to supply a contingent of twenty thousand men.

The winter of 1807 sees a suspension of hostilities between the French and Russian Empires; but those Empires are on a collision course and a change in their destiny can be observed. However, Bonaparte's star is still in the ascendant despite his aberrations. On the 9th of February, 1807, he inspects the battlefield at Eylau: that place of carnage gives us one of Gros' finest paintings, adorned with an idealized head of Napoleon. After fifty-one days of siege, Dantzic opens its gates to Marshal Lefebvre, who was continually saying to his gunners during the siege: *'I know nothing about it; but make me a hole and I will pass through.'* The former sergeant in the French Guards became Duke of Dantzic.

On the 14th of June 1807, Friedland costs the Russians seventeen thousand dead and wounded, as many prisoners, and seventy cannon; we paid too dearly for it; we had a different kind of enemy; we no longer achieved success except by freely opening French veins. Königsberg is taken; an armistice is concluded at Tilsit.

Napoleon and Alexander meet in a pavilion, on a raft. Alexander keeps the King of Prussia, whom one is scarcely aware of, on a leash: the fate of the world floats on the Niemen, where it will later be fulfilled. At Tilsit, a secret treaty in ten articles was discussed. By this treaty, European Turkey would be devolved to Russia, as well as whatever Muscovite conquest and weaponry could achieve in Asia. For his part, Bonaparte would become master of Spain and Portugal, would reunite Rome and its dependencies with the Kingdom of Italy, would cross to Africa, seize Tunis and Algiers, possess Malta, and invade Egypt, the Mediterranean being open only to French, Russian, Spanish and Italian vessels: these were the cantatas playing endlessly in Napoleon's brain. A plan to invade India by land had already been agreed in 1800 between Napoleon and Emperor Paul I.

Peace is concluded on the 7th of July. Napoleon, hateful from the first to the Queen of Prussia, chose not to respond to her intercessions. She stayed, forlornly, in a little house on the right bank of the Niemen, and was honored by being twice invited to the Emperors' dinners. Silesia once invaded unjustly by Frederick, was given to Prussia: the rights of that previous injustice were respected; what was achieved by force was sacred. One region of Polish territory passed under the sovereignty of Saxony; Danzig's independence was re-established; those killed in its streets and ditches counted for nothing: ridiculous and pointless wartime murders! Alexander recognized the Confederation of the Rhine, and Napoleon's three brothers Joseph, Louis and Jérôme, as Kings of Naples, Holland, and Westphalia.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 7

#### The War in Spain – Erfurt – The Emergence of Wellington

That fatality with which Bonaparte threatened kings threatened him also; almost simultaneously he attacks Russia, Spain and Rome: three doomed enterprises. You can read in *Le Congrès de Vérone* [*The Congress of Verona* (1822)] whose publication has preceded that of these *Memoirs*, the history of the invasion of Spain. The Treaty of Fontainebleau was signed on the 29th of October 1807. Junot, arriving in Portugal, declared that according to Bonaparte's decree the House of Braganza had *ceased to reign*; to adopt the protocol: you will be aware that they still reign. They were so well informed in Lisbon as to what was happening in the world that John VI was only aware of this decree through an edition of the *Moniteur* carried there by chance, when the French army was already only three day's march from the capital of Lusitania. It merely remained for the court to flee to those seas that welcomed Da Gama's sails, and knew the verses of Camoëns.

At the moment that Bonaparte, to his misfortune, penetrated Russia in the north, the curtain rose in the south; other regions and scenes appeared, the sun of Andalusia, the palm trees of the Guadalquivir to which our grenadiers presented arms. Bullfights were on display in the arena, half-naked guerrillas in the mountains, and priests at prayer in the cloisters.

With the invasion of Spain, the character of the war altered; Napoleon found himself opposing England, his fatal genius; and it gave him a lesson in warfare: England destroyed Napoleon's fleet at Aboukir, halted him at Saint-Jean-d'Acre, removed his remaining ships at Trafalgar, forced him to evacuate Iberia, seized the south of France as far as the Garonne, and awaited him at Waterloo: today they guard his grave at St. Helena as they occupied his cradle of Corsica.

On the 5th of May 1808, the Treaty of Bayonne, in the name of Charles IV cedes all that monarch's rights to Napoleon: the confiscation of Spanish possessions, shows Bonaparte only as an Italian Prince, in the style of Machiavelli's, except for the enormity of the theft. The occupation of the Peninsula reduces his forces positioned against Russia, of which he is still ostensibly a friend and ally, but towards which at heart he bears a hidden animosity. In his proclamation, Napoleon said to the Spaniards: '*Your nation has been destroyed. I have seen your ills, I am going to remedy them; I wish your most distant cousins to preserve the memory of me and say: he was the regenerator of our country.*' Yes, he was the regenerator of Spain, but he uttered words he ill understood. A catechism of those days, composed by the Spanish, explained the true meaning of his prophecy:

*'Tell me, my son, who are you? – A Spaniard, by the grace of God. – Who is inimical to our happiness? – The Emperor of France. – What is he? – A miscreant. – How many natures has he? – Two, a human nature and a diabolical nature. – What gave birth to Napoleon? – Sin. – What torment does a Spaniard deserve who fails in his duty? – The death and infamy due to traitors. – Who are the French? – Former Christians turned heretics.'*

Bonaparte, after his fall, condemned his Spanish foray in unequivocal terms: '*I embarked,*' he said, '*on that affair, on quite the wrong basis.* Immorality is revealed by excessive license, injustice by excessive



*cynicism, and the whole thing appears quite vile to me since I succumbed; for that assault appears merely nakedly shameful, when deprived of all the great and numerous potential benefits which filled out my plan. Posterity would advocate it yet, if I had succeeded, and with reason maybe, given its great and fortunate results. That project did for me. It destroyed my moral standing in Europe, and created a training ground for English soldiers. That wretched Spanish War was a genuine wound, the original cause of France's misfortunes.'*

This confession, to re-deploy Napoleon's phrase, is excessively cynical; but we are not deceived by it: in accusing himself, Bonaparte's aim is to drive into the desert, under a curse, that devious assault, in order to summon up unreserved admiration for all his other actions.

With the battle lost to us at Bailén, the rulers of Europe, astonished at the Spanish success, blush at their own faint-heartedness. Wellington appears on the horizon for the first time, in the direction of the sunset; the English army disembarks on the 31st of July 1808 near Lisbon, and on the 30th of August the French troops evacuate Lusitania. In his satchel Soult had proclamations in which he titled himself Nicolas I, King of Portugal. Napoleon recalled the Grand-Duke of Berg from Madrid. He was pleased to effect a transmutation between his brother Joseph, and his brother-in-law, Joachim: he took the crown of Naples from the head of the former and set it on the head of the latter; with a flourish of his hand he deposited these adornments for the hair on the foreheads of two new kings, and off they went, in different directions, like two conscripts exchanging shakos.

On the 27th of September, at Erfurt, Bonaparte gave one of the last demonstrations of his power; he thought to have fun with Alexander and made him drunk on praise. One general wrote: '*We gave a glass of tincture of opium to the Tsar and, while he slept, we occupied ourselves elsewhere.*'

A hut had been transformed into a theatre; two armchairs were placed in front of the orchestra for the two potentates; to left and right, fancy chairs for the monarchs; behind were benches for the princes: Talma, king of the stage, played before stalls full of kings. At the line:

*'A great man's friendship is a blessing from the gods.'*

Alexander took his great friend's hand, bowed and said: '*I have never felt it more deeply.*'

To Bonaparte's eyes, at that time, Alexander appeared a fool; he made a laughing-stock of him; he admired him only when he considered him deceitful: '*He is a Greek of the Later Empire,*' he would say, '*one must set him at nought.*' At Erfurt, Napoleon affected the bold effrontery of a conquering soldier; Alexander dissimulated like a conquered prince: cunning grappled with lies, Occidental politics and Oriental politics maintained their masks.

London evaded the overtures of peace, and the Vienna ministry deceitfully decided on war. Abandoned once more to his imagination, Bonaparte made this declaration to the Legislative Corps, on the 26th of October: '*The Emperor of Russia and I met one another at Erfurt: we are of one mind, and unalterably united in peace as in war.*' He added: '*When I appear on that side of the Pyrenees, the terrified Leopard will seek the Ocean to escape disgrace, defeat or death.*' But the Leopard appeared *on this side* of the Pyrenees.

Napoleon who always believed what he wished, thought he would return to Russia, after having achieved the submission of Spain in four months, as has since happened to the Legitimacy, consequently he retired eighty thousands of the veterans of Saxony, Poland and Prussia; he himself marched on Spain; to the deputation from the city of Madrid he said: *‘There is no obstacle which can long delay the execution of my wishes. The Bourbons can no longer reign in Europe; no power under the influence of England can exist on the Continent.’*

It was thirty-two years ago that this oracle was proclaimed, and that the taking of Zaragoza, on the 21st of February 1809, announced universal deliverance.

All that French gallantry was of no avail; the forests armed themselves, the bushes became enemies. Reprisals prevented nothing, because in those regions reprisals are expected. The business of Bailén, the defenses of Girona and Cuidad-Rodrigo, signaled the resurrection of a people. La Romana, at the far end of the Baltic, sent his regiments to Spain, as formerly the Franks, fleeing the North Sea, landed triumphantly at the mouths of the Rhine. Conquerors of superior forces in Europe, we shed blood of lesser ones with that impious rage that France acquired from Voltaire’s buffooneries and the atheistic madness of the Terror. Yet it was those militias of the cloister who put an end to the success of our experienced soldiers; they did not wait to encounter these monks, on horseback like fire-breathing dragons, among the burning timbers of the Zaragoza buildings, loading their blunderbusses amidst the flames, to the sound of mandolins, to the rhythm of the *bolero*, and the *requiem* mass for the dead: the ruins of Saguntum applauded.

But nevertheless the secret of the Moorish palaces, changed into Christian basilicas, was penetrated; the pillaged churches lost their masterpieces by Velásquez and Murillo; fragments of the bones of Rodrigo at Burgos were disinterred; men were so filled with glory they did not fear to rouse the *Cid*’s ghost against them, just as they did not fear to irritate the shade of Condé.

When, on leaving the ruins of Carthage, I travelled through Hesperia before the French invasion, I found the Spaniards still protected by their ancient way of life. The Escorial revealed to me, in a single site and a single set of buildings, Castilian severity: a barracks for coenobites, built by Philip II in the shape of a martyr’s grid, in remembrance of one of our disasters, the Escorial was built on rocky ground among gloomy barrens. It contained royal tombs, filled or to be filled; a library on which the spiders had set their seal; and masterpieces by Raphael moldering away in an empty sacristy. Its eleven hundred and forty windows, three quarters of them broken, opened on silent reaches of earth and sky: the Court and the Hieronymites, gathered there formerly, expressed their epoch and their distaste for their epoch.

Near that redoubtable edifice, like an aspect of the Inquisition driven into the desert, was a park scattered with broom and a village whose smoke-stained buildings revealed the ancient passage of man. This Versailles of the barrens was only inhabited during intermittent royal visits. I saw a redwing, thrush of the heath, perched on the roof at dawn. Nothing could be more imposing than that sombre religious architecture, invincible in its faith, noble in its expression, taciturn in its history; an irresistible force drew my eyes to the sacred pilasters, stone hermits carrying religion on their heads.

Farewell, monasteries, which I have gazed at in the valleys of the Sierra Nevada, and on the coast of Murcia! There, to the tolling of a bell which soon will chime no more, under crumbling archways, among

*lauras* without anchorites, voiceless tombs, the shade-less dead; in empty refectories, and abandoned courtyards where Bruno has left behind his silence, Francis his sandals, Dominic his torch, Charles his crown, Ignatius his sword, Rancé his hair-shirt; there, at the altar of a dying faith, one became accustomed to despising time and life: if one still dreamed of the passions there, your solitude lent them something which well suited the vanity of dreams.

Among these funereal buildings, one saw the shade of a man in black pass, that of Philip II, their creator.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 8

#### Pius VII – The Union of the Roman States with France

Bonaparte was subject to the transit of what the astrologers call an *adverse planet*: the same political pressures which troubled him in vassal Spain troubled him in submissive Italy. What had been the result of his squabbles with the clergy? Were the sovereign Pontiff, bishops, and priests, even the catechism, not overflowing with praise of his power? Did they not preach sufficient obedience? Were the weakened Roman States, diminished by half, an obstacle to him? Were things not subject to his will? Had not Rome itself been despoiled of its masterpieces and its treasures? Only its ruins remained to it.

Was it the moral and religious power of the Holy See that Napoleon feared? Yet, in persecuting the Papacy, did he not increase that power? Would not Saint Peter's successor, submissive, as he was, have been more useful working in concert with his master, than being forced to defend himself against his oppressor? What drove Bonaparte then? The dark side of his genius, his inability to rest: an eternal gambler, when he could not stake an empire on a card, he staked a fantasy.

It is probable that at the root of these anxieties lay some desire for domination, some recollections from history entering athwart his ideas, inapplicable to his times. All authority (even that hallowed by time and faith) which was not attributed to himself seemed an insult to the Emperor. Russia and England fed his hunger for dominance, one because of its autocracy, the other because of its spiritual supremacy. He recalled the time when the Popes resided at Avignon, when France enclosed the source of religious dominance within its own boundaries: a salaried Pope on the Civil List would have delighted him. He could not see that in persecuting Pius VII, in rendering himself guilty of pointless ingratitude, he lost the benefit of appearing as the restorer of religion among the Catholic community: in his covetousness he acquired the last vestments of the priestly nonentity who had crowned him, and the honor of playing gaoler to an old and dying man. Yet in the end Napoleon required a *department of the Tiber*; it is said that he could not achieve total conquest except by taking the Eternal City: Rome is always the world's greatest prize.

Pius VII had blessed Napoleon. On the point of returning to Rome, the Pope was told that he might be held in Paris: '*All is foreseen,*' the Pontiff replied, '*before leaving Italy I signed a formal notice of abdication; it is in the hands of Cardinal Pignatelli at Palermo, outside the range of French power. Instead of a Pope, all that will remain in your hands is a monk named Barnabé Chiaramonti.*'

The initial pretext for dispute given by the one seeking the dispute was the permission the Pope had accorded the English (with whom the sovereign Pontiff was at peace) to visit Rome like other foreigners. Now, Jérôme Bonaparte having married Miss Patterson in the United States, Napoleon disapproved of his alliance: Madame Jérôme Bonaparte, about to give birth, was not allowed to disembark in France and was obliged to land in England. Bonaparte wished the marriage annulled by Rome; Pius VII refused, finding no reason to nullify the contract, even though it had been made between a Catholic and a Protestant. Who defended the rules of justice, liberty and religion, the Pope or the Emperor? It was the latter who cried: '*I have found a priest in this century more powerful than I; he rules minds, I only rule matter: the priests keep the soul and leave me the body.*' Remove Napoleon's bad faith from the communications between

those two men, one standing among the ruins of the new, the other seated among the ruins of the old, and an extraordinary depth of greatness remains.

A letter dated from Benavente in Spain, from the theatre of destruction, mixes the comic with the tragic: one might think oneself present at a performance of Shakespeare: the master of the world orders his Minister of Foreign Affairs to write to Rome and tell the Pope that he, Napoleon, would not accept the Candlemas candles, which the King of Spain, Joseph no longer desired; the Kings of Naples and Holland, Joachim and Louis, were equally required to refuse the aforesaid candles.

The French Consul had been ordered to tell Pius VII '*that it was neither crimson robes nor power which give things their worth (the crimson robes and power of an aged captive!), that there might well be Popes and priests in hell, and that a candle blessed by a priest might be as holy a thing as that blessed by a Pope*': wretched indecencies of the philosophy of the clubs.

Then Bonaparte, having passed in a stride from Madrid to Vienna, taking up his role of exterminator once more, by a decree dated the 17th of May 1809, united the Papal States with the French Empire, declared Rome a free imperial city, and named a *Consulte* (Council) to take possession of it.

The Pope, having been dispossessed, still lived in the Quirinal; he still had command of several devoted members of the authorities, and the Swiss of his Papal Guard; it was excessive: Bonaparte needed a pretext for a final act of force; it was found in a ridiculous incident, which nevertheless displayed a naïve proof of affection: the fishermen of the Tiber had caught a sturgeon; they wanted to take it to their new Saint Peter in Chains; the agents of France immediately called this a *riot*, and whatever of the Papal government remained was dispersed. The sound of the cannon from Castel Sant'Angelo announces the fall of the Pontiff's temporal sovereignty. The Papal flag is lowered and gives way to that tricolor which has announced glory and ruin in all parts of the world. Rome has seen plenty of other storms pass by and vanish: it is only necessary to lift the dust with which her ancient brow is covered.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 9

The sovereign Pontiff's protest – He is removed from Rome

Cardinal Pacca, one of the successors to Consalvi, who had retired, hastens to the Holy Father. Both of them cry: '*Consummatum est! (All is over!)*' The Cardinal's nephew, Tiberio Pacca, brings him a copy of a decree of Napoleon's; the Cardinal takes the decree, goes to a window whose closed shutters only allow a meagre light to enter, and tries to read the paper; he only does so with difficulty, with his unfortunate sovereign a few paces from him, while listening to the cannon fire of the imperial triumph. Two old men at night in a Roman palace struggling alone against a force which was crushing the world; they drew on the vigor of old age: near death one is invincible.

The Pope first signed a solemn protest; but before signing the *Bull* of excommunication prepared some time ago, he enquired of Cardinal Pacca: '*What would you do?*' – '*Lift your eyes to Heaven,*' replied his servant, '*then give your orders: what issues from your mouth will be what Heaven wills.*' The Pope raised his eyes, signed and said: '*Let the Bull go forth.*'

Megacci posted the first copies of the Bull on the doors of three churches, Saint Peter's, Santa Maria Maggiore, and San Giovanni in Laterano. The placards were torn down; General Miollis dispatched one to the Emperor.

If anything could have given excommunication a little of its ancient force, it was Pius VII's virtue: among the ancients a lighting flash from a calm sky was considered the more threatening. But the Bull still displayed a weakness of character: Napoleon, included among the *spoliators* of the Church, was not *expressly* named. The times were fearful; the timid took refuge, with a secure conscience, in this absence of nominal excommunication. It was necessary to fight against thunder-bolts; it was necessary to hurl lightning for lightning, since defence was not an option; it was necessary to suspend religion, close the doors of the temples, forbid church-going, and order priests not to administer the sacraments. Whether the times were right or not for this great attempt, it was worth trying: Gregory VII had not failed to do so. If on the one hand there was insufficient faith to sustain an excommunication, on the other, there was not enough for Bonaparte, like Henry VIII, to make himself head of a separate Church. The Emperor, totally excommunicated, found himself in inextricable difficulties: force could close churches, but not open them; there was no way of forcing people to worship or priests to offer the holy sacrament. Never had anyone played as overwhelming a game with Napoleon.

A sixty-eight year old priest, without a single soldier, held the Empire in check. Murat dispatched seven hundred Neopolitans to Miollis, the inaugurator of the feast of Virgil at Mantua. Radet, General of the Gendarmerie who was in Rome, was charged with seizing the Pope and Cardinal Pacca. Military precautions were employed, and orders were given in the greatest of secrecy exactly as on Saint Bartholomew's Night: when an hour after midnight struck on the Quirinal clock, the troops that had assembled in silence began intrepidly to climb the stairs of the two decrepit priests' gaol.

At the agreed moment, General Radet penetrated the courtyard of the Quirinal via the main entrance; Colonel Siry, who had slipped into the palace, opened the doors for him from within. The General ascended to the apartments: having arrived in the Hall of Sanctification, he found the Swiss Guard there, forty strong; they made no resistance, having received orders to abstain from doing so: the Pope wished only God to defend him.

The palace windows giving onto the street running to the Porta Pia had been shattered by axe-blows. The Pope having risen in haste, dressed in rochet and mozetta, occupied the Hall of Common Audience with Cardinal Pacca, Cardinal Despuig, several prelates and members of the secretariat. He was sitting before a table between the two Cardinals; Radet enters; both parties remain silent. Radet, pale and disconcerted, finally speaks: he tells Pius VII that he must renounce temporal sovereignty over Rome, and that if his Holiness refuses to obey, he has orders to conduct him to General Miollis.

The Pope replied that if the vows of loyalty obliged Radet to obey Bonaparte's injunctions, all the more reason why he, Pius VII, must keep the vows which he made when receiving the tiara; he could neither yield nor abandon the domain of the Church which did not belong to him, and of which he was merely the administrator.

The Pope having asked if he must go alone: '*Your Holiness*,' the general replied, '*may take your minister with you*.' Pacca hastened to don his Cardinal's robes in a neighboring chamber.

On Christmas Eve, Gregory VII, while celebrating Holy Communion at Santa Maria Maggiore, was dragged from the altar, beaten about the head, despoiled of his ornaments and led to one of the towers by order of the Prefect Cencius. The people took up arms; a fearful Censius fell at his captive's feet; Gregory, having calmed the people, was led back to Santa Maria Maggiore and completed the Communion.

Nogaret and Colonna, entering at night (on the 8th of September 1303) in Agnani, attacked Boniface VIII's residence, he waiting for them with his Pontiff's mantle over his shoulders, his head crowned with the tiara, armed with the keys and cross. Colonna struck him in the face: Boniface dying later of anger and grief.

Pius VII, humble and dignified, showed neither the same human courage nor the same worldly pride; his exemplar was closer to him in time; his trials resembled those of Pius VI. Two Popes of the same name, one the successor of the other, were victims of our revolutions. Both dragged through France on the *Via Dolorosa*; one, at the age of eighty-two, brought to die at Valence, the other, a septuagenarian, enduring imprisonment at Fontainebleau. Pius VII seemed the ghost of Pius VI, travelling the same road.

When Pacca returned in his Cardinal's robe, he found his august master already in the hands of the gendarmes and their henchmen who forced him to descend the stairs through the debris of the overthrown doors. Pius VI, taken from the Vatican on the 20th of February 1798, three hours before sunrise, forsook the world of masterpieces which seemed to mourn him and left Rome, through the Porta Angelica. Pius VII, taken from the Quirinal on the 6th of July at daybreak, left by the Porta Pia; he made a tour of the walls as far as the Porta del Popolo. This Porta Pia, where I have so often walked alone, was that by which Alaric entered Rome. Following the circuit, along which Pius VII passed, I only saw in the Villa

Borghese Raphael's retreat and in Monte Pincio the refuge of Claude Lorrain, and Poussin; marvelous memories of female beauty and the light of Rome; memories of artistic genius sponsored by Papal power, which might pursue and console a captive and despoiled prince.

When Pius VII left Rome, he had in his pocket a papetto worth twenty two sous: like a soldier at five sous per halt, he has regained the Vatican. Bonaparte, at the moment of General Radet's exploit, had his hands full of kingdoms: what else remained? Radet has written an account of his exploit; he had a picture painted which he has left to his family: so are notions of justice and honor confused in some minds.

In the courtyard of the Quirinal, the Pope met his Neapolitan oppressors; he blessed them and the city: that apostolic benediction infusing everything, misfortune as well as prosperity, gives a particular character to the events of the lives of these royal Pontiffs who in no way resemble other kings.

The post horses were waiting outside the Porta del Popolo. The blinds of the coach into which Pius VII climbed were drawn on the side where he sat; the Pope entered, the doors were doubly locked, and Radet put the keys in his pocket; the Chief of Gendarmes had to accompany the Pope as far as the Charterhouse at Florence.

At Monterossi weeping women stood on their doorsteps: the General begged his Holiness to lower the blinds in order to conceal himself. The heat was oppressive. Towards evening Pius VII requested a drink; the sergeant Cardigny filled a bottle from a natural spring flowing by the road; Pius VII drank with great pleasure. On the hill of Radicoiani, the Pope stopped at a humble inn; his vestments were drenched with sweat, and he had nothing to change into; Pacca helped the servant make up his Holiness' bed. On the next day the Pope came across some peasants, and said to them: '*Courage and prayer!*' They passed through Siena; they entered Florence, and one of the carriage wheels shattered; the people, moved, cried: '*Santo padre! Santo padre!*' The Pope was pulled through the overturned carriage's door. Some prostrated themselves; others touched His Holiness' vestments, as the people of Jerusalem did the robe of Christ.

The Pope was at last able to start for the Charterhouse; he was the heir of the bed which Pius VI had occupied ten years earlier, in that solitude, where two grooms hoisted him into the carriage as he groaned with pain. The Charterhouse belonged to the Vallombrosa site; through a series of pine woods you reached Camaldoli, and from there, from cliff to cliff, the summit of the Apennines from which two seas can be seen. An abrupt command forced Pius VII to leave again for Alessandria; he had time only to ask the prior for a breviary; Pacca was separated from his royal Pontiff.

From the Charterhouse to Alessandria the populace crowded in from every side; they threw flowers to the prisoner, they gave him water, they presented him with fruit; the countrymen wanted to free him, calling out: '*Vuole? Dica! Do you wish it? Say!*' An old thief stole a pin from him, a relic which would open the gates of heaven for the culprit.

Three miles from Genoa, a litter bore the Pope to the seashore; a felucca carried him from the far side of the town to San Pier d'Arena. By way of Alessandria and Mondovi Pius VII reached the first French village; he was welcomed there with effusions of religious tenderness; he said: '*How could God allow us to be insensible to these marks of affection?*'



The Spaniards taken prisoner at Zaragoza were being held at Grenoble: like those European garrisons forgotten amongst the hills of India, they sang at night and made the alien atmosphere echo with the airs of their homeland. Suddenly the Pope descends on them; he seemed to have responded to those Christian voices. The prisoners fly to meet this new captive; they fall to their knees; Pius VII almost pushes his whole body through the door; he extends his thin and trembling hands over these warriors who have defended Spanish liberty with the sword, as they have defended Italian liberty with their loyalty; the twin swords cross over those heroic heads.

From Grenoble Pius VII reached Valence. There, Pius VI had died; there, he exclaimed when shown to the people: *'Ecce homo!'* There, Pius VI parted company from Pius VII; the dead man encountering his grave, entered it; he brings the twin apparition to an end, for until then the two Popes could be seen travelling together, like the shadow accompanying the body. Pius VII wore the ring that Pius VI had on his finger when he died: the emblem of his having accepted the wretchedness and fate of his precursor.

Two leagues from Comana, Saint John Chrysostom rested at the chapel of Saint Basiliscus; that martyr appeared to him during the night and said to him: *'Courage: brother John! Tomorrow we will be together.'* John replied: *'Glory be to God for all things!'* He lay down on the ground and died.

At Valence, Bonaparte had begun the career with which he hurtled towards Rome. Pius VII was not allowed the time to visit the remains of Pius VI; he was urged precipitately towards Avignon: in order to bring him to that little Rome where he could view the ice cellar beneath the palace of another line of Pontiffs, and hear the voice of the laurel-crowned poet of former times who had summoned the successors of Saint Peter back to the Capitol.

Driven on recklessly, he entered Savoy Maritime; at the Pont du Var, he wished to cross on foot; he met the population ranked in order of merit, the ecclesiastics dressed in their sacerdotal vestments, and ten thousand people kneeling in profound silence. The Queen of Etruria with her two children, also kneeling, waited for Saint Peter at the end of the bridge. At Nice, the streets of the town were strewn with flowers. The captain, who was taking the Pope to Savona, took an unfrequented road through the woods that night; to his great astonishment he found himself in the midst of a flood of solitary light; a lantern had been hung from every tree. Along the seafront, the Corniche was similarly illuminated; the ships saw these signals from afar lit, for the shipwreck of a captive priest, out of respect, tenderness and piety. Was this the way Napoleon returned from Moscow? Was he preceded by reports of his good deeds and his blessing of the people?

During this long journey, the Battle of Wagram had been won, while Napoleon's marriage with Marie-Louise was delayed. Thirty Cardinals summoned to Paris were exiled, and the Roman *Consulte* created by France had to announce anew the union of the Holy See and the Empire.

The Pope, while detained at Savona, weary and besieged by Napoleon's creatures, issued a brief, whose principal author was Cardinal Roverella, which allowed confirmatory Bulls to be sent to the various bishops named. The Emperor had not expected such compliance; he rejected the brief because it would have obliged him to set the royal Pontiff at liberty. In an access of rage he ordered the Cardinals who opposed him to quit their crimson robes; some were imprisoned at Vincennes.

The Prefect of Nice wrote to Pius VII that: *'he was forbidden to communicate with any church in the Empire, under sentence of disobedience; that he, Pius VII, had ceased to be the organ of the Church because he was preaching rebellion and his spirit was full of venom; and that, since nothing could make him see sense, he would find His Majesty quite powerful enough to depose a Pope.'*

Was it actually the victor of Marengo who dictated the minute of this same letter?

At last, after three years in captivity at Savona, on the 9th of June 1812, the Pope was summoned to France. He was requested to change his clothes: conducted to Turin, he arrived at the hospice of Mont Cenis in the middle of the night. There, close to death, he received extreme unction. He was only permitted to halt for the time necessary to administer the last sacraments; he was not allowed to remain close to Heaven. He did not complain; he gave a fresh example of the meekness of the martyr of Vercelli. At the foot of the mountain, at the moment when she was about to be beheaded, seeing the clasp of the executioner's chlamys fall, she said to the man: *'See, a gold clasp has just fallen from your shoulder; pick it up, for fear of losing what you have only won with much effort.'*

During his journey through France, Pius VII was not allowed to descend from his carriage. When he ate some food it was in that same carriage, which was locked when starting the next stage. On the 20th of June in the morning he arrived at Fontainebleau; three days later Napoleon crossed the Niemen to begin his expiation. The doorman refused to receive the prisoner, because no such order had yet reached him. The order having been sent to Paris, the Pope enters the chateau; heavenly justice thereby entering with him: on the same table where Pius VII rested his failing hand, Napoleon signed his abdication.

If the iniquitous invasion of Spain roused the world of politics against Bonaparte, the unrewarding occupation of Rome set him against the world of morality: without the least benefit, he alienated as if for pleasure nations and altars, man and God. Between these two precipices he had created at the borders of his life, he travelled, by a straight path, to seek his destruction at the boundary of Europe, as if over the bridge that Death, aided by disease, threw across the chaos.

Pius VII is no stranger to these *Memoirs*: he was the first sovereign to whom, during my political career, begun and suddenly interrupted during the Empire, I carried out an embassy. I see him still, receiving me at the Vatican, *Le Génie du Christianisme* open on his desk, in the same office to which I have been admitted to kneel at the feet of Leo XII and Pius VIII. I like to recall what he underwent; my remembrance of his sufferings will repay my debt of gratitude to him, for his blessing of those other sufferings at Rome in 1803.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 10

The Fifth Coalition – The Capture of Venice – The Battle of Essling – The Battle of Wagram – Peace signed in the Emperor of Austria's palace – Divorce – Napoleon marries Marie-Louise – The birth of the King of Rome

On the 9th of April 1809, the Fifth Coalition between England, Austria and Spain, was declared, silently relying on the discontent of other nations. The Austrians, complaining of the violation of previous treaties, all at once crossed the River Inn at Braunau: they have been reproached for their tardiness, they wanted to do a Napoleon; but speed was not their style. Happy to have left Spain, Bonaparte hastened to Bavaria; he set himself at the head of the Bavarians without waiting for the French: any soldiers would do for him. At Abensberg, he defeated Archduke Louis, at Eckmühl Archduke Charles: he cuts the Austrian Army in two, and achieves the passage of the Salza.

He enters Vienna. On the 21st and 22nd of May the dreadful affair of Aspern-Essling takes place. The account of Archduke Charles reports that, on the first day, two hundred and eighty eight Austrian cannon fired fifty-one thousand rounds, and that, on the next day, more than four hundred cannon took part on both sides. Marshal Lannes was mortally wounded. Bonaparte spoke to him and then forgot him: human relationships cool as quickly as the cannonball that strikes them.

The Battle of Wagram (5th-6th of July 1809) continues the run of battles executed in Germany: Bonaparte deploys all his genius there. General César de Laville, ordered to prevent disaster striking the left flank, finds him on the right flank directing Marshal Davout's attack. Napoleon immediately returns to the left flank and repairs the damage incurred by Masséna. It was then, at the moment when the battle was thought lost, that, alone judging to the contrary from the enemy maneuvers, he shouted: 'The battle is won!' He sets his mind against a half-hearted victory; he brings things back to the boil as Caesar dragged his astonished veterans back to the fight by the throat. Nine hundred mouths of bronze roar; the plain and the cornfields are in flames; whole villages vanish; the action lasts twelve hours. In one charge alone, Lauriston trots towards the enemy at the head of a hundred cannon. Four days afterwards they gathered up, amongst the wheat, soldiers who had died in the sunlight beneath the trampled crop, lying there, sticky with blood: maggots had already infested the wounds of the riper corpses.

In my youth, people read commentaries by Folard and Guischart, Tempelhof and Lloyd, on Frederick II's campaigns; they studied ordre profond and ordre mince; on my second-lieutenant's desk I manoeuvred plenty of little squares, of wood. Military science changed like everything else as a result of the Revolution; Bonaparte invented war on a grand scale, the victories of the Republic having furnished him with the idea through their mass requisitions. He despised fortresses, which he was content to ignore; adventured into countries he had invaded, and won everything by dint of battle. He was never concerned with retreat; he travelled straight ahead like those Roman roads that cross mountains and precipices without a detour. He moved all his forces to one point, and then gathered in an arc the isolated corps whose lines he had scattered. This manoeuvre which suited him was in accord with *French aggression*; but it produced scant success with less impetuous and agile troops. Towards the end of his career he also ordered artillery charges and took redoubts with cavalry. What was the result? In leading France into war, Europe was taught how to march: it was no more than a question of increasing the means; masses

counter-balanced masses. Instead of a hundred thousand men, six hundred thousand were employed; instead of a hundred cannon, five hundred were used: there is no increase in skill; it is merely on a larger scale. Turenne knew as much as Bonaparte, but he was not absolute master and had not forty million men at his disposal. Sooner or later we must return to the civilized warfare Moreau still knew, warfare which leaves nations intact while a small number of soldiers carry out their duty; we must revisit the art of retreat, the defence of a country by means of fortresses, and patient maneuvers which cost time but spare men. Napoleon's gigantic battles are beyond the bounds of glory; the eye cannot embrace those fields of carnage which, eventually, fail to produce a result proportional to their calamities. Europe, barring unforeseen events, will be weary of war for many a long year. Napoleon has killed war by exaggerating it: our Algerian war is merely an experimental training ground created for our soldiers.

Among the dead, on the field of Wagram, Napoleon showed the impassibility that both belonged to him and that he affected when he appeared before others; he spoke coldly or more often he repeated his habitual phrase in such circumstances: *'This is a mighty consummation!'*

When wounded officers were mentioned to him, he replied: *'They are not present.'* If military virtue teaches various virtues, it weakens others: too humane a soldier cannot accomplish his task; the sight of blood and tears, the suffering, the cries of pain, delaying him at every step, would destroy within him what created the Caesars; a race, after all, that one would happily do without.

After the battle of Wagram an armistice was agreed at Znaïm. The Austrians, according to our bulletins, retired in good order and left not one mounted cannon behind them. Bonaparte, in possession of Schonbrunn, worked there on the peace. *'On the 13th of October,'* says the Duke of Cadore, *'I came to Vienna to work with the Emperor. After a few moments discussion, he said to me: "I am going to the review; stay in my office; you can draw up that note and I'll read it after the review." I stayed in his office with Monsieur de Menéval his private secretary; he soon returned. – "Has the Prince of Lichtenstein made known to you," Napoleon said to me, "that it has often been suggested to him that I should be assassinated?" – "Yes, Sire; he expressed the horror with which he rejected such proposals." – "Well, Someone is here to try! Follow me." I went into the salon with him. There were several people looking very agitated, surrounding a young man from eighteen to twenty years old, of a fine, quite mild appearance, proclaiming a kind of candor, who alone seemed to be perfectly calm. It was the assassin. He was interrogated with extreme gentleness by Napoleon himself, General Rapp serving as interpreter. I will only record those of his replies which struck me favorably.*

*"Why do you wish to assassinate me?" – "Because there can be no peace for Germany while you are alive." – "What inspired you to attempt this?" – "Love of my country." – "Have you discussed it with anyone else?" – "I was conscience-bound." – Do you realize the danger to which you exposed yourself?" – "I realize it; but I would be happy to die for my country." – "You own to religious principles; do you think that God authorizes assassination?" – "I hope that God will forgive me on account of my motive." – "Do they teach that doctrine in the schools you have attended?" – "A large number of those who attended them with me are animated by these sentiments and disposed to devote their life to their country's good." – "What will you do if I set you at liberty?" – "I will kill you."*

*The shocking naivety of these replies, the cold and unshakeable intent they indicated, and that fanaticism, so resolute in the face of human fear, made an impression on Napoleon that I regarded as the more*

*profound the more cold-blooded it appeared. He made everyone retire, and I alone stayed with him. After a few comments on a fanaticism so blind and so intellectual, he said to me: "It is essential to make peace."* This account by the Duc de Cadore deserves to be quoted in its entirety.

The nations commenced to levy troops; to Bonaparte they heralded enemies more powerful than kings; the resolution of one man among a people saved Austria then. However Napoleon's fate had not yet averted its gaze. On the 14th of August 1809, in the Austrian Emperor's own palace, he made peace; on that occasion a daughter of the Caesars was the palm offered; but Josephine was crowned, and Marie-Louise was not: with his first wife's departure, the virtue of the divine unction seemed to leave the conqueror. I might have seen in Notre-Dame de Paris the same ceremony which I saw in the cathedral at Rheims; with the exception of Napoleon the same people were present.

One of the hidden actors who took most part in the internal workings of this matter was my friend Alexandre de Laborde, wounded in the *émigré* ranks, and honored with the cross of Maria Theresa for his wounds.

On the 11th of March the Prince de Neuchâtel as proxy married the Archduchess Marie-Louise, The latter left for France, accompanied by the Princess Murat: Marie-Louise was adorned en route with royal emblems. She arrived at Strasbourg on the 22nd of March and on the 29th at the Chateau of Compiègne where Bonaparte was waiting for her. The civil marriage took place at Saint-Cloud on the 1st of April; on the 2nd Cardinal Fesch gave the nuptial blessing to the newly-weds in the Louvre. Bonaparte taught this second wife to be unfaithful to him, as the first had been, by deceiving himself in his own bed through his intimacy with Marie-Louise before the celebration of their religious marriage; a majestic contempt for royal morality and holy law which did not augur well.

All seemed complete; Bonaparte had obtained the one thing he lacked: like Philippe-Auguste allying himself with Isabelle de Hainault, he linked the most recent of races to *the race of great kings*; the past was joined to the future. Gazing backwards or forwards, he is from now on the master of the centuries if he can only remain at the summit; yet he has the power to halt the world, but not the power to halt himself: he will go on until he has won the last crown that pays the price for all the others, the crown of misfortune.

On the 20th of March 1811, the Archduchess Marie-Louise, gave birth to a son: the alleged penalty for the previous felicities. Of this son, hatched, like Arctic birds, under a midnight sun, only a sad waltz remains, composed by himself at Schonbrunn, and played on the street-organs of Paris, round his father's palace.

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 11

#### Plans and preparations for the War on Russia – Napoleon's embarrassment

Bonaparte had run out of enemies; not knowing where to find any more empires, for want of anything better, he took the kingdom of Holland from his brother. But an inimical reservation concerning Alexander, which went back to the time of the Duc d'Enghien's death, remained in the depths of Napoleon's heart. Rivalry over power inspired it; he knew what Russia could achieve and what price he had paid for the victories of Friedland and Eylau. The meetings at Tilsit and Erfurt, the suspension of hostilities, a peace that Bonaparte's character found insupportable, the declarations of friendship, the handclasps, the embraces, the fantastic projects for conquering cities, all this was merely an adjournment of dislike. One of the continent's countries, one of its capitals remained which Napoleon had not yet entered, an empire opposing the French Empire; the two colossi were forced to re-assess each other. By dint of extending France, Bonaparte came up against Russia, as Trajan, in crossing the Danube, encountered the Goths.

A natural placidity, sustained by sincere piety, since his return to religion, inclined Alexander towards peace: he would never have broken it if others had not sought to do so. All of 1811 passed in preparation. Russia invited a tamed Austria and a trembling Prussia to join with her in case of attack; England arrived bringing its wealth. The Spanish example had aroused the nations' sympathy; the League of Virtue (the Tugendbund) was being formed, which little by little encompassed the nascent Germany.

Bonaparte negotiated; he made promises; he allowed the King of Prussia to hope for possession of the Russo-German provinces; the King of Saxony, and Austria, flattered themselves with the hope of obtaining further possessions among which was Poland; the Princes of the Confederation of the Rhine dreamed of territorial change working to their advantage; it was not only France which Napoleon thought to enlarge, though it already extended across Europe; he claimed the addition of Spain in his name. General Sébastiani asked him, '*and your brother?*' Napoleon replied: '*What about my brother! Does one give away a kingdom like Spain?*' The master with a royal command disposed of that which had cost Louis XIV so much pain and sacrifice; but he did not hold it as long. As for nations, no man has taken less account of them or held them in greater contempt than Bonaparte; he threw the scraps to the pack of kings whom he led in the hunt, whip in hand: '*Attila*,' Jornandes claims, '*led a crowd of tributary princes around with him who waited in fear and trembling for a sign from that master of kings to carry out their orders.*'

Before marching on Russia, with his allies Austria and Prussia, and with the Confederation of the Rhine composed of kings and princes, Napoleon wished to secure his flanks which touched the borders of Europe: he negotiated two treaties, one in the south with Constantinople, the other in the north with Stockholm. These treaties failed.

Napoleon, during his Consulate, had renewed contact with the Porte: Selim III and Bonaparte had exchanged their portraits; they maintained a secret correspondence. Napoleon wrote to his accomplice, from Ostend, dated the 3rd of April 1807: '*You show yourself the worthy descendent of Selim and Suleiman. Tell me what you need: I am still as powerful and as interested in your success, as much*

*through friendship as policy, that I will refuse you nothing.'* A charming effusion of tenderness between two Sultans talking beak to beak, as Saint-Simon would have said.

Selim having been overthrown, Napoleon returns to the Russian plan and dreams of sharing Turkey with Alexander; then, overwhelmed yet again by a new cataclysm of ideas, he decides on his invasion of the Muscovite empire. But it is not until the 21st of March 1812 that he requests Mahmud's alliance, suddenly asking him for a hundred thousand Turks on the banks of the Danube. For this army, he offers the Porte Wallachia and Moldavia. The Russians had anticipated him; their treaty was at the point of agreement, and was signed on the 28th of May 1812.

In the north, equally, events overtook Bonaparte. The Swedes might have been capable of invading Finland, as the Turks threatened the Crimea: with that combination of attacks Russia, with two wars on hand, would have found it impossible to unite its forces against France; there would be such large scale political dealings today, if the world were not morally and physically more compact due to the flow of ideas and the railroads. Stockholm, retreating to a nationalist position, came to an arrangement with St Petersburg.

After losing Pomerania in the French invasion of 1807, and Finland to Russia in 1808, Gustaf IV had been deposed. Gustaf, loyal but unstable, has added to the number of kings wandering the earth, and I, I gave him a letter of recommendation to the Fathers of the Holy Land: he found solace at the tomb of Jesus Christ. Gustaf's uncle replaced his deposed nephew. Bernadotte, having commanded the French Army Corps in Pomerania, was drawn to Swedish notice, they cast their eyes over him; Bernadotte was chosen to fill the void left by the Prince of Holstein-Augustenburg, hereditary Prince of Sweden, newly elected, who had died. Napoleon viewed the election of his erstwhile comrade with displeasure.

The enmity between Bonaparte and Bernadotte reached new heights: Bernadotte had been opposed to the 18th Brumaire: later, he had contributed, by his animated conversation and the intellectual ascendancy he held, to those disunities which brought Moreau before a court of justice. Bonaparte took revenge in his own way, by seeking to ruin a man of character. After the judgement against Moreau, he presented Bernadotte with a house on the Rue Anjou, taken from the condemned general; due to a then common weakness, Joseph's brother-in-law dared not refuse this dishonorable gift. Grosbois was given to Berthier. Fate having put the scepter of Charles XII into the hands of a compatriot of Henri IV, Charles-Jean thwarted Napoleon's ambitions; he thought it would be safer to have Alexander, his neighbor, as ally, than Napoleon as his distant enemy; he declared neutrality, advised peace and offered himself as mediator between Russia and France.

Bonaparte enters in a rage; shouts: 'That wretch, he gives me advice! He wants to lay down the law to me! A man who owes all to my generosity! What ingratitude! I shall know how to force him to obey my sovereign will!' Following this violent display, on the 5th of April 1812, Bernadotte signed the treaty of Petersburg.

Do not ask by what right Bonaparte called Bernadotte a *wretch*, forgetting that he, Bonaparte, had come from no more elevated a source, and no different an origin: the Revolution and the military. This insulting language reveals neither hereditary pride in rank, nor grandeur of soul. Bernadotte was not ungrateful: he owed nothing to Bonaparte's generosity.

The Emperor had become transformed into an old style king who claimed all for himself, talked only about himself, and thought to reward or punish merely by saying that he was satisfied or discontented. A host of centuries spent under a monarchy, a long series of tombs in Saint-Denis, are still no excuse for such arrogance.

Fate brought two French generals, from the United States and Northern Europe, onto the same field of battle, to make war on a man against whom they had been united from the first, and who had parted them. Soldier and king, neither thought it had been a crime then to wish to overthrow the oppressor of liberty. Bernadotte triumphed, Moreau died. The men who vanish in youth are the vigorous travellers; they quickly find a path that weaker men only achieve with slow steps.



## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 12

The Emperor undertakes his Russian expedition – Objections – Napoleon's mistake

It was not without warning that Bonaparte insisted on war with Russia: the Duc de Frioul, the Comte de Ségur, the Duc de Vicenza, having been consulted, offered a host of objections to the enterprise: *'It was pointless for him,'* the younger Ségur states courageously (*Histoire de la grande armée*) *'while seizing a continent and even states belonging to the family of his ally, to accuse that ally of defecting from the Continental system. While the French army covered Europe, why reproach the Russians for their army? Did he need to throw away all those Germans, whose wounds on our behalf were not yet healed? The French already no longer recognized themselves, in the midst of a country without natural frontiers. Who then would defend the true France left behind? – My fame'* replied the Emperor, Medea provided his response: Napoleon brought tragedy upon himself.

He announced a plan to organize the Empire in cohorts by ban and arrière-ban: his mind was a confusion of memories and times past. To the objection that there were still opposing parties within the empire, he replied: *'The Royalists dread my ruin more than they desire it. The most useful and difficult thing I have done was to dam the Revolutionary torrent: it would have swallowed up everything. You fear for my life in war? To kill me, that is impossible: have I yet accomplished the will of Fate? I feel as though I am being urged towards an unknown goal. When I reach it, an atom will be enough to destroy me.'* It was plagiarism still: the Vandals in Africa, Alaric in Italy, claimed they were yielding to a divine impulse: divino jussu perurgeri.

The absurd and shameful quarrel with the Pope adding to the dangers of Bonaparte's position, Cardinal Fesch begged him not to attract the enmity of heaven and earth at the same moment: Napoleon took his uncle's hand, led him to the window (it was night) and said to him: *'Do you see that star?'* – *'No, Sire.'* – *'Look carefully.'* – *'Sire, I see nothing.'* – *'Well I do, I see it.'*

*'You too,'* said Bonaparte, to Monsieur de Caulaincourt, *'will become Russian.'*

*'Often one saw him (Napoleon),'* Monsieur de Ségur assures us, *'reclining on a couch, plunged in profound meditation; then he suddenly wakes from it with a start, his features convulsed, exclaiming aloud; he thinks he hears his name and cries out: 'Who calls me?'* Then he gets up, walks about in agitation.'

When Le Balafre met with disaster, he climbed to the battlements of a turret of the Château of Blois, called the Breton's Perch: beneath an autumn sky, the empty countryside stretching far away, he could be seen walking with long strides in furious motion. Bonaparte, in his salutary moments of caution said: *'Nothing around me is stable enough for me to wage war far away; it must be delayed for three years.'* He offered to declare to the Tsar that he would contribute neither directly nor indirectly towards the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Poland: old and new France both deserted that faithful and unfortunate country.

That desertion is one of the gravest of all the political errors Bonaparte committed. He declared, following that mistake, that if he had not moved to promote that re-establishment which was so strongly indicated, it was because he was afraid of displeasing his father-in-law. Bonaparte was a fine one to be constrained by

family considerations! The excuse was so feeble that it merely led, when made, to a souring of his marriage with Marie-Louise. Far from feeling the same about the marriage, the Emperor of Russia exclaimed: *'See me dismissed to the depths of my forests.'* Bonaparte was quite simply blind to the antipathy he possessed towards the freedom of nations.

Prince Poniatowski organized the Polish troops during the French Army's first invasion; the body politic assembled: France maintained two successive ambassadors in Warsaw, the Archbishop of Malines and Monsieur Bignon. The French of the North, the Poles were brave and light-hearted like us; they spoke our language; they loved us like brothers; they died for us with a loyalty that breathed aversion for Russia. France had forgotten them in the past; there was an obligation to revivify them: was nothing owed to that nation which saved Christianity? I said this to Alexander at Verona: *'If Your Majesty does not re-establish Poland, you will be obliged to eradicate it.'* To pretend that the country was condemned to occupation by its geographical position, is to grant too much to rivers and hills: a score of nations, possessed of courage alone, have maintained their independence, while Italy, defended by the Alps, has fallen beneath the yoke of whoever chose to cross them. It would be fairer to recognize another aspect of destiny, realizing that warlike nations, inhabiting the plains, are condemned to conquer: the various invaders of Europe have overrun the plains.

Far from helping Poland, it was decided that her soldiers should wear the national cockade; poor as she was, she was charged with maintaining a French army of eighty thousand men; the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was promised to the King of Saxony. If Poland had been recreated as a kingdom, the Slavic race from the Baltic to the Black Sea would have regained its freedom. Even given the neglect with which Napoleon treated the Poles while making use of them, they asked to be sent to the front; they boasted that they alone could enter Moscow without us: an ill-timed suggestion! The armed poet, Bonaparte, had re-appeared; he wished to reach the Kremlin in order to poetize there and sign decrees regarding the theatre.

Whatever is said today in praise of Bonaparte, that great democrat, his hatred of constitutional government was overwhelming; it never left him even when he had entered the threatening wastes of Russia. Senator Wibicki brought to him, in Vilna, the resolutions of the Diet of Warsaw: *'It is for you,'* he said, with sacrilegious exaggeration, *'it is for you who dictate the history of the century, in whom the power of Providence resides, it is for you to support efforts of which you must approve.'* He came, Wibicki, to ask Napoleon the Great to pronounce these few words: *'that the Kingdom of Poland exists'*: and the Kingdom of Poland shall exist. *'The Poles, will dedicate themselves to the commands of a leader before whom the centuries are but a moment, and space but a single point.'*

Napoleon replied:

*'Gentlemen, deputies of the Polish Confederation, I have heard what you came to say to me with interest. As a Pole, I would think and act as you do: I would have voted with you in the Warsaw assembly. Love of country is the primary duty of civilized man.'*

In my position, I have many interests to reconcile and many duties to fulfil. *If I had ruled during the first, second or third partition of Poland, I would have armed my nations to defend her.*

*I love your country! For sixteen years I have seen your soldiers at my side, on the battlefields of Italy, and those of Spain. I applaud what you have done; I authorize the efforts you wish to make; I will do all in my power to further your resolutions.*

*I have made the same speeches to you since I first entered Poland. I should add that I have guaranteed the Austrian Emperor integrity of his domains, and that I cannot sanction any maneuver, or action that might disturb his peaceful possession of what remains to him of the Polish provinces.*

*I will recompense this devotion shown by your land, which renders you so worthy of interest and wins you so great a title to my esteem and protection, with all that may be possible to me in the circumstances.'*

Crucified by this trading of nations, Poland has been abandoned; her passion has been open to insult; the sponge soaked with vinegar has been presented to her, while on the cross of liberty she has said: 'Sitio, I thirst.' 'When Liberty,' Mickiewicz cried, 'shall sit on the world throne, she will judge the nations. She will say to France: I have called you, you have not heard me: go then into slavery.'

'Must so many sacrifices, so many labors,' said the Abbé de Lamennais, 'prove sterile? Have the sacred martyrs only sown eternal slavery in the fields of the motherland? What do you hear in those forests? The sad murmur of the wind. What do you see passing over those plains? The wandering bird that seeks a place to rest.'

## BOOK XX

### CHAPTER 13

The meeting in Dresden – Bonaparte reviews his army and arrives on the banks of the Niemen

On the 9th of May 1812, Napoleon left for the Army and went to Dresden. It was at Dresden that he assembled the scattered resources of the Confederation of the Rhine, and that, for the first and last time, he set in motion that machine which he had created.

Among exiled masterpieces far from their Italian sun, a meeting took place between the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress Marie-Louise, the Emperor and Empress of Austria, and a crowd of sovereigns, great and small. These sovereigns aspired to form from their various courts subordinate circles to the leading court: they disputed over the vassalage; one wished to be cup-bearer to the second-lieutenant from Brienne, another to be his bread-bearer. The history of Charlemagne is recalled through the erudition of the German chancellery; the nobler one was the more one groveled: ‘*A Lady Montmorency*,’ Bonaparte says, in Las Cases’ *Mémorial*, ‘*would have hastened to lace up the Empress’ shoes.*’

Whenever Bonaparte walked through the palace at Dresden to go to a reception which had been prepared, he went first, in advance, his hat on his head; Francis II followed, hat in hand, accompanying his daughter, the Empress Marie-Louise; the crowd of princes followed behind, randomly, in respectful silence. The Empress of Austria was missing from the procession; she said she was ill, and never left her apartments except in a sedan chair, to avoid giving her arm to Napoleon, whom she detested. What remained of noble sentiment had retreated to the depths of female hearts.

One king only, the King of Prussia, was first kept at a distance: ‘*What does this Prince want of me?*’ Bonaparte shouted impatiently. ‘*Is he not importunate enough in his letters? Why does he want to persecute me further with his presence? I have no need of him.*’ Harsh words warning of disaster, pronounced on the eve of disaster.

Frederick-William’s great crime, for the *republican* Bonaparte, was to have *abandoned the royal cause*. The negotiations between the court in Berlin and the Directory *revealed in this Prince*, said Bonaparte, *a political timidity, self-interest, and lack of nobility, which sacrificed dignity and the common cause of kings to petty gain*. When he looked at the new Prussia on a map, he cried: ‘*Perhaps I have left that man too much land!*’ Of the three allied Commissioners who conducted him to Fréjus, the Prussian Commissioner was the only one whom Bonaparte received discourteously and with whom he wished nothing to do. The hidden cause of the Emperor’s aversion for William has been sought; it has been located in one or other specific circumstance: in speaking of the death of the Duc d’Enghien, I think I have come closest to the truth.

Bonaparte waited at Dresden for his army columns to move by: Marlborough, in the same city, on his way to meet Charles XII, noticed on a map a line leading to Moscow; he guessed that the monarch would

take that route, and would not join the war in the West. In not admitting his invasion plans aloud, Bonaparte was nevertheless unable to conceal it; for the diplomats he set out three grievances: the ukase (decree) of the 31st of December 1810, prohibiting certain imports into Russia, thereby destroying, by that prohibition, the *Continental System*; Alexander's protest at the annexation of the Duchy of Oldenburg; and Russian re-armament. If one were not used to the abuse of language, one would be astonished to see the import procedures of an independent State, and the violation of a system that State has not adopted, being given as a legitimate reason for war. As for the annexation of the Duchy of Oldenburg and Russian re-armament, you can read that the Duke of Vicenza dared to point out to Napoleon the presumption of these reproaches. Justice is so sacred, it seems so essential to success that even those who tread it underfoot claim to act only by its principles.

However General Lauriston was sent to St Petersburg and the Comte de Narbonne to Alexander's headquarters: carriers of dubious messages of peace and good will. The Abbé de Pradt had been dispatched to the Polish Diet; he returned from there calling his master *Jupiter-Scapin*. The Comte de Narbonne reported that Alexander, neither despondent nor haughty, preferred war to a shameful peace. The Tsar always professed a naïve enthusiasm for Napoleon; but he said that the Russian cause was just, and that his ambitious friend was wrong. That truth, expressed in the Muscovite bulletins, caught the national mood: Bonaparte became the *Antichrist*.

Napoleon left Dresden on the 29th of May 1812, travelling to Posen and Thorn; there he saw the Poles plundered by his other allies. He descended the Vistula, stopping at Danzig, Königsberg and Gumbinnen.

Along the route, he reviewed his diverse troops: to the veterans, he spoke of the Pyramids, Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland; with the young men he concerned himself with their needs, their equipment, their pay, their officers: he delighted in this moment of benevolence.

## **End of Book XX**

## BOOK XXI

### CHAPTER 1

The Invasion of Russia – Vilna – Wibicki, the Polish Senator – The Russian Parliamentary  
Balashov – Smolensk – Murat – Platov's son

When Bonaparte crossed the Niemen, eighty-five million five hundred thousand souls recognized his rule or that of his family; half the population of Christendom obeyed him; his orders were executed over the space of nineteen degrees latitude and thirty degrees longitude. Never has so gigantic an expedition been seen before, nor will be seen again.

On the 22nd of June, at his headquarters at Wilkowiski, Napoleon declares war: *'Soldiers, the second Polish War has commenced; the first ended at Tilsit; Russia is driven on by fate: her destiny must be accomplished.'*

Moscow replies to this still youthful voice through the mouth of its Metropolitan, a hundred and ten years old: *'The city of Moscow welcomes Alexander its Savior as a mother in the arms of her eager sons, and sings Hosanna! Blessed be he who comes!'* Bonaparte addressed himself to Destiny, Alexander to Providence.

On the 23rd of June 1812, Bonaparte reconnoitered the Niemen at night; he ordered three bridges thrown across it. At nightfall of the following day, a handful of sappers crossed the river by boat; they found no one on the other side. A Cossack officer, commanding a patrol, came up to them and asked who they were. *'Frenchmen.'* – *'Why have you come to Russia?'* – *'To make war on you.'* The Cossack vanished into the trees; three sappers fired towards the forest; there was no response: just universal silence.

Bonaparte spent a whole day lying down, without strength but without recuperation either: he could feel something retreating from him. His military columns advanced through the forest of Pilwisky, under cover of darkness, like the Huns who were led by a doe across the Sea of Azov. The Niemen could not be seen; to recognize it one had to be on its banks.

At daybreak, instead of Muscovite battalions, or Lithuanians, advancing to meet their liberators, there was only bare sand and empty forest to be seen: *'Three hundred paces from the river on the highest point the Emperor's tent was visible. Around it all the hills, slopes and valleys were covered with men and horses.'* (Ségur.)

The whole force under Napoleon's orders amounted to six hundred and eighty thousand three hundred infantry, and seventy-six thousand eight hundred and fifty cavalry. In the War of the Succession, Louis XIV had six hundred thousand men under arms, all French. The regular infantry, under Bonaparte's immediate command, was divided into ten corps. These corps were made up of twenty thousand Italians; eighty thousand men from the Confederation of the Rhine; thirty thousand Poles; thirty thousand Austrians, twenty thousand Prussians; and two hundred and seventy thousand Frenchmen.

The army crosses the Niemen; Bonaparte passes over the fateful bridge himself and sets foot on Russian soil. He halts to watch his soldiers file past then vanishes from sight, to gallop at random through the forest, as if he has been summoned to a council of spirits on the heath. He returns; he listens; the army listens. They imagined they could hear cannon fire rumbling in the distance; they were filled with joy: it

was merely a storm; battle was postponed. Bonaparte took shelter in a deserted monastery: a doubly peaceful sanctuary.

There is a story that Napoleon's horse stumbled and someone was heard to murmur: *'It's a bad omen; a Roman would turn back.'* This is the old tale told of Scipio, William the Conqueror, Edward III, and Malesherbes setting out for the Revolutionary Tribunal.

Three days were needed for the troops to cross; then they fell into line and advanced. Napoleon pressed on; time cried out to him: *'March! March!'* as Bossuet once proclaimed.

At Vilna, Bonaparte received Senator Wibicki, of the Diet of Warsaw: a Russian parliamentarian, Balashov, presented himself in turn; he declared that a treaty was still possible, that Alexander was not the aggressor, and that the French had appeared in Russia without declaring war. Napoleon replied that Alexander was merely a parade-ground general; and that Alexander only had three real generals: Kutuzov, about whom he, Bonaparte, was not concerned since he was Russian; Bennigsen, who had been too old six years earlier and was now in his second childhood; and Barclay, who was retired. The Duke of Vicenza, believing himself to have been insulted by Bonaparte during the conversation, interrupted him angrily: *'I am a good Frenchman; I have proved so; I will prove it again by repeating that this war is ill-advised, dangerous, and will ruin the army, France and the Emperor.'*

Bonaparte had said to the Russian envoy: *'Do you think I care about your Polish Jacobins?'* Madame de Staël records this last comment, her exalted contacts kept her well-informed: she affirms that a letter exists written to Monsieur de Romanzov by one of Bonaparte's Ministers, which proposed the erasure of the words Poland and Polish from European treaties: overwhelming proof of Napoleon's contempt for his brave petitioners.

Bonaparte asked Balashov how many churches there were in Moscow; on his replying, he exclaimed: *'What, so many churches in an age which is no longer Christian?'* – *'Pardon, Sire,'* replied the Muscovite, *'the Russians and the Spaniards still are.'*

Balashov having been dispatched with several unacceptable proposals, the last glimmer of peace vanished. The bulletins proclaimed: *'Here then is the Russian Empire, so formidable from afar! It is a wasteland. It will take Alexander longer to collect his troops than Napoleon to reach Moscow.'*

Bonaparte, arriving in Vitebsk, thought for a moment of calling a halt there. Returning to his headquarters, after seeing Barclay retreat once more, he flung his sword onto some maps and exclaimed: *'I am stopping here! My 1812 campaign is over: that of 1813 will do the rest.'* He would have been happier if he had kept to this resolution which all his generals advised. He had invested some pride in receiving fresh peace proposals: seeing none appear, he grew bored; he was only twenty days from Moscow. *'Moscow, the holy city!'* he kept saying. His eyes flashed, his brow darkened: the order to advance was given. Representations were made to him; he disdained them; Daru, when questioned, replied that: *'he could conceive neither the purpose nor the necessity for such a war.'* The Emperor replied: *'Do they take me for a madman? Do they think I make war on whim?'* Had they not heard him, the Emperor, say that *'the Spanish War and the Russian were two cancers gnawing at France'*? But to make peace, that needed two, and not a single letter from Alexander had been received.

And those *cancers*, where did they come from? These inconsequential statements go unnoticed, and are transformed if needs be into proofs of Napoleon's guileless sincerity.

Bonaparte would have thought it degrading to be caught acknowledging an error. His soldiers complain that they no longer see him except in moments of battle, forever sending them to their deaths, never trying to keep them alive: he is deaf to their complaints. The news of peace between the Russians and Turks surprises him but does not hold him back: he launches himself on Smolensk. The Russian proclamations declared: *'He (Napoleon) is coming, treachery in his heart but loyalty on his lips; he is coming to chain us to his legions of slaves. Let us carry the cross in our hearts and steel in our hands; let us draw the teeth of this lion; let us overthrow the tyrant who overthrows the world.'*

On the heights of Smolensk Napoleon met up with the Russian Army, composed of a hundred and twenty thousand men: *'I have them!'* he exclaimed. On the 17th of August, at daybreak, Belliard hurled a band of Cossacks into the Dnieper; the curtain of troops having fallen back, the Russian army could be seen on the road to Moscow; it was retiring. Bonaparte's dream had eluded him once more. Murat, who had played a major part in the vain pursuit, felt such despair he wanted to die.

He refused to quit one of our batteries shattered by the fire from the citadel of Smolensk, which had not yet been evacuated: *'Get back, all of you; leave me alone here!'* he shouted. A fierce attack on that citadel took place: lined up on the heights above, which formed an amphitheater, our army contemplated the battle below: when they saw the attackers plunging forward through fire and grapeshot, they clapped their hands as they had done on seeing the ruins of Thebes.

During the night, a fire attracted attention. One of Davout's non-commissioned officers scaled the wall, and entered the citadel through the smoke; the sound of distant voices reached his ear: pistol in hand he advanced in that direction, and to his great astonishment, ran into a friendly patrol. The Russians had abandoned the town, and Poniatowski's Poles had occupied it.

When we saw the Hetman Platov in Paris, we did not know of his paternal affliction: in 1812 he had a son, handsome as the Orient; this son rode a superb white horse from the Ukraine; the seventeen year old warrior fought with the daring of youth which flowers and hopes: a Polish *uhlan* (lancer) killed him. The Cossacks came respectfully to kiss the hand of the corpse which was laid out on a bearskin. They chanted the funeral prayers, and interred him on a pine-covered hillock; then, holding their horses' bridles, they filed round the grave, with the points of their lances reversed: one might have thought one was watching an example of those funerals described by the historian of the Goths, or the Praetorian Guard reversing their *fascies* before the ashes of Germanicus, *versi fascies*. *'The wind blew flakes of snow along, carried by the northern spring in its hair.'* (Saemund's Edda)



## BOOK XXI

### CHAPTER 2

The Russian retreat – The Borysthènes – Bonaparte's obsession – Kutuzov succeeds Barclay in command of the Russian Army – The Battle of Moscow or Borodino – Bulletin – The appearance of the battlefield

Bonaparte wrote to France from Smolensk saying that he was owner of the Russian salt-works, and that his Minister of Finance could count on eighty millions more.

Russia fled towards the pole: the nobility, leaving their wooden châteaux, left with their families, their serfs and their herds. The Dnieper, the ancient *Borysthènes*, whose waters were once proclaimed as holy by Vladimir, was crossed: that river had brought the Barbarian invasions to the civilized nations; now it carried an invasion by the civilized nations. A savage disguised under a Greek name, it no longer brought to mind the first Slavic migrations; it continued to flow unnoticed, carrying among forests, in its small boats, instead of *Odin's* children, perfumes and shawls for the ladies of St Petersburg and Warsaw. Its story for the world only commences at those eastern mountains where Alexander's altars were raised.

From Smolensk an army could be led either towards St Petersburg or Moscow. Smolensk should have been a warning to the conqueror to halt; for a moment he felt urged to do so: '*The Emperor*,' says Monsieur Fain, '*greatly discouraged, spoke of the idea of stopping at Smolensk.*' Medical supplies were already beginning to run out. General Gourgaud records that General Lariboisière was obliged to hand over the wadding from his guns: in order to provide dressings for the wounded. But Bonaparte was driven on; he delighted in contemplating the twin dawns at the ends of Europe which lit his armies, one above scorching plains the other over frozen steppes.

Orlando, in his narrow circuit of chivalry, chased after Angelica; conquerors of the first rank pursue a nobler sovereign: no rest for them until they clasp in their arms that divinity crowned with towers, the bride of Time, daughter of Heaven and mother of the gods. Obsessed by his own being, Bonaparte reduced everything to the personal; Napoleon had taken possession of Napoleon; there was no longer anything in him but self. So far he had only explored famous regions; now he was travelling a nameless road along which Peter the Great had scarcely sketched out the future cities of an empire not yet a hundred years old. If precedents were instructive, Bonaparte might have been concerned by the memory of Charles XII who passed through Smolensk on his way to Moscow. At Kolodrina there was a murderous engagement: the French corpses were buried in haste, so that Napoleon could not judge the extent of his losses. At Dorogobouj, he encountered a Russian with a beard of dazzling whiteness covering his chest: too old to follow his family and left alone in his house, he had seen the marvels of the end of Peter the Great's reign and now, filled with silent indignation, was present to witness the devastation of his country.

A succession of battles, offered and refused, brought the French to the field of Borodino. At every bivouac the Emperor discussed the situation with his generals, listening to their arguments while seated on a pine branch or toying with a Russian cannon ball which he rolled about with his foot.

Barclay, the Livonian pastor, become a general, was the originator of this series of retreats which gave autumn time to overtake him: an intrigue at Court toppled him. The ageing Kutuzov replaced Barclay, Kutuzov who was beaten at Austerlitz because his advice, to avoid battle until the arrival of Prince Charles, was ignored. The Russians saw Kutuzov as a general of their own, Suvorov's pupil, conqueror of

the Grand Vizier in 1811, and author of the peace treaty with the Porte, so necessary to Russia at that time. At this juncture, a Muscovite officer presented himself at Davout's outpost; he had been charged with bringing vague proposals; his true mission seemed to be to inspect and examine: he was shown everything. The French with their carefree, fearless curiosity asked him what they would find between Vyazma and Moscow: 'Pultava,' he replied.

Reaching the heights of Borodino, Bonaparte saw the Russian Army at last, which had halted and was formidably entrenched. It consisted of a hundred and twenty thousand men and six hundred guns; the French had a similar force. After inspecting the Russian left, Marshal Davout advises Napoleon to turn the enemy flank. '*That would lose me too much time*', the Emperor replies. Davout insists: he undertakes to complete his maneuver before six in the morning; Napoleon interrupts sharply: '*Oh, you are always wanting to turn the enemy's flank.*'

A great stir could be seen in the Muscovite camp: the troops were under arms; Kutuzov, surrounded by priests and archimandrites and preceded by religious emblems and a holy icon rescued from the ruins of Smolensk was talking to his soldiers about Heaven and the motherland; he called Napoleon the universal despot.

In the midst of battle songs and triumphant choruses mingled with cries of grief, a Christian voice was heard from the French camp also; it could be distinguished from all the rest; it was the sacred hymn rising alone beneath the vaults of the church. The soldier, whose voice calm, yet full of emotion, lingered beyond the others, was the aide-de-camp of the Marshal in command of the Horse-Guards. This aide-de-camp had been involved in every battle of the Russian Campaign; he speaks of Napoleon, as one of his greatest admirers; but he recognized his weaknesses; he corrects false tales, and declares that the errors made were due to the leader's pride and his officers' neglect of God. '*In the Russian camp,*' Lieutenant-Colonel Baudus says, '*they sanctified that vigil on a day which would be the last for so many brave men...*

*The spectacle offered to my eyes by the enemy's piety, as well as the jests it suggested to too many of the officers in our ranks, reminded me that the greatest of our kings, Charlemagne, was also inclined to begin the most dangerous of his enterprises with religious ceremony.*

*Ah, doubtless, among those errant Christians, a large number were to be found whose sincere belief sanctified their prayers; for if the Russians were defeated at the Moskva, our complete annihilation, which can in no way be considered glorious, since it was the manifest work of Providence, would show several months later that their pleas had only been too favorably heard!*

But where was the Tsar? He happened to say modestly to the fugitive Madame de Staël that he regretted *not being a great general*. At that moment Monsieur de Bausset, an officer of the Palace, appeared in our bivouacs: come from the tranquil woods of Saint-Cloud, following the dreadful tracks of our army, he arrived on the eve of the funerals by the Moskva; he had been charged with a portrait of the King of Rome, which Marie-Louise had sent to the Emperor. Monsieur Fain and Monsieur de Ségur portray the feeling which seized Napoleon on seeing it; according to General Gourgaud, Bonaparte, having viewed the portrait, exclaimed: '*Take it away; he is seeing the field of battle too soon.*'

The day before the storm was extremely calm: *'The kind of skill,'* says Monsieur Baudus, *'which goes into preparing such cruel follies, is somewhat humiliating to human reason when one thinks about it cold-bloodedly at my age; since, in my youth, I found it quite fine.'*

Towards evening on the 6th of September, Bonaparte dictated this proclamation; it was not known to most of his remaining troops until after the victory:

*'Soldiers, here is the battle you so longed for. Victory now depends on you; it is essential to us, it will bring us wealth and a quick return home. Conduct yourselves as you did at Austerlitz, Friedland, Vitebsk and Smolensk, and may the most remote posterity cite your conduct on this day; may they say of you: "He was at that great battle before the walls of Moscow."*

Bonaparte spent an anxious night: at one moment believing the enemy was retreating, at another worrying about his soldiers' destitute state, and his officers' weariness. He knew what was being said all around him: *'To what end have we been made to march two thousand miles only to find marsh-water, hunger, and a bivouac among smoking ruins? Every year the war is worse: fresh conquests force him to seek out fresh enemies. Soon Europe will no longer suffice; he must have Asia.'* Indeed Bonaparte had looked with no indifferent eye on the waters which flowed into the Volga; born for Babylon, he had already been tempted by a previous route. Halted at Jaffa, at the western gate of Asia, halted at Moscow, at the northern gateway to that very Asia, he departed to die among the waves at the edge of that region of the world where mankind and the sun were born.

In the middle of the night, Napoleon summoned one of his aides-de-camp; the latter found him with his head buried in his hands: *'What is war?'* he asked; *'a barbaric trade whose only art consists in being stronger at any given point.'* He complained of the inconstancy of fortune; he sent for reports on the enemy positions: he was told that the fires were burning as brightly and in the same numbers; he calmed down. At five in the morning, Ney sent a request for the order to attack; Bonaparte went outside and exclaimed: *'Let us open the gates of Moscow.'* Day broke; Napoleon pointed to the eastern sky which was beginning to redden: *'See, the sun of Austerlitz!'* he cried.

## BOOK XXI

### CHAPTER 3

Extract from the eighteenth bulletin of the Grand Army

*‘Mojaisk, 12th September 1812.*

*...On the 6th, at two in the morning, the Emperor rode up and down the enemy's forward positions; the day was spent in mutual reconnoitering. The enemy held a very well-defended position...*

*The position appeared good and strong. It would have been easy to maneuver and force the enemy to leave; but that would have delayed the action...*

*On the 7th, at six in the morning, General Comte Sorbier, who had set up the battery on the right with artillery from the Guard's Reserve, began to fire...*

*At half-past six, General Compans was wounded. At seven, the Prince d'Eckmühl's horse was killed...*

*At seven, Marshal le Duc d'Elchingen started to move forward once more and, under the protection of sixty cannon that General Foucher had positioned opposite the enemy center the previous evening, advanced towards the center. A thousand guns vomited death on every side.*

*At eight, the enemy positions were won, their redoubts taken, and our artillery crowned the summits...*

*The enemy redoubts on the right still held out; General le Comte Morand advanced and took them; but at nine in the morning, attacked on all sides, he could not maintain his position. The enemy, encouraged by this success, advanced their reserve and their remaining troops in order to try their luck. The Russian Imperial Guard was part of the maneuver. It attacked our center on which our right had pivoted. For a moment it looked as though it might take the burning village; Friant's division fell on it; eighty French cannon first halted and then began to destroy the enemy columns which held out for two solid hours under heavy bombardment, not daring to advance, not wishing to retreat, while renouncing all hope of victory. The King of Naples put an end to their indecision; he ordered the fourth cavalry corps to charge; it penetrated the gaps that our cannon bombardment had made in the serried mass of Russians and theirs squadrons of cuirassiers; they scattered in all directions.....*

*At two in the afternoon, the enemy abandons hope: the battle is over, the gunfire still continues; they beat the drums for a retreat and salute, but not for victory.*

*Our total losses are estimated at ten thousand men; those of the enemy at forty or fifty thousand. A like battlefield has never been seen. Of every six corpses one was French and five Russians. Forty Russian generals were killed, wounded or taken: General Bagration was wounded.*

*We have lost Major-General le Comte Montbrun, killed by a cannonball; General le Comte Caulaincourt, who had been sent to replace him, was killed in a similar manner an hour later.*

*Brigadier-Generals Compère, Plauzonne, Marion, and Huard have been killed; seven or eight Generals have been wounded, most of them lightly. The Prince d'Eckmühl is unharmed. The French troops have covered themselves with glory and have shown their great superiority over the Russians.*

*Such in a few words is a sketch of the Battle of the Moskva, waged thirty miles from Mojaisk and seventy-five miles from Moscow.*

*The Emperor was never in danger; the Guard, on foot or horseback, has not yielded or lost a single man. The victory was never in doubt. If the enemy, forced from their positions, had not decided to re-take them, our losses would have been greater than theirs; but they have destroyed their army in holding fast from eight till two under fire from our batteries and persisting in re-taking what they had surrendered. That is the reason for their immense losses.'*

This calm and reticent bulletin gives little idea of the Battle of the Moskva, and particularly of the terrible massacre at the Grand Redoubt: eighty thousand men were rendered *hors de combat*; thirty thousand of them belonged to France. Auguste de La Rochejaquelein had his face slashed by a sabre blow and became a prisoner of the Muscovites: he remembered other battles and another flag. Bonaparte, reviewing the 61st Regiment which had been virtually annihilated, said to the colonel: 'Colonel, what have you done with one of your battalions?' – 'Sire, it is in the Redoubt.' The Russians have always maintained and still maintain that they won the battle: they decided to raise a triumphal funeral column on the heights of Borodino.

Monsieur de Ségur's narrative supplies what is missing from Bonaparte's bulletin: '*The Emperor rode up and down the field of battle.*' he says. '*There has never been one with so terrible an aspect. All things conspired: a cloudy sky, a chill rain, a violent wind, houses in ashes, a devastated plain covered with debris and ruins; on the horizon the sad and sombre verdure of the northern trees; soldiers everywhere, wandering among the corpses looking for supplies, even in their dead comrades' knapsacks; terrible wounds, for the Russian cannonballs are larger than ours; silent bivouacs; no more songs, an end to stories: only a dismal taciturnity.*

*Around the eagles, the remaining officers and junior officers could be seen, and a few soldiers, scarcely enough to guard the flags. Their uniforms were torn from the fierce fighting, blackened with powder, stained with blood; and yet, in the midst of these scarecrows, this wretchedness, this disaster, they had a proud air, and even, on sight of the Emperor, gave a few victory cries, though sparse and frenzied: since, in that army capable, in those days of analysis, of enthusiasm, each man judged the position of them all...*

*The Emperor could only judge his victory by the dead. The ground within the redoubts was so strewn with recumbent Frenchmen that it appeared to belong to them more than to those who remained standing. There seemed to more dead conquerors than living ones there.*

*Amongst the mass of bodies, over which it was necessary to step in order to follow Napoleon, a horse's hoof touched a wounded man and drew from him a last sign of life and pain. The Emperor, mute till then like his victory, oppressed by the sight of so many victims, cried out, and relieved his feelings in cries of indignation, and by a multitude of attentions which he insisted on this poor wretch being shown. Then he sent the officers following him away, to help those who could be heard crying out on all sides.*

*Above all they could be found in the deep ravines into which the majority of our casualties had been precipitated, and where several had been dragged to give them more shelter from the enemy and the storm. Some while groaning called out the name of their country or their mother: they were the youngest. The older men waited for death with an impassive or sardonic air, without deigning to plead or complain:*

*others demanded to be killed on the battlefield: but we passed by these wretched men, able to bring them neither the vain mercy of assistance, nor the cruel mercy of dispatch.'*

Such is Monsieur de Ségur's tale. Anathema to the victories which are not won in defence of the motherland, and which only serve to feed a conqueror's vanity!

The Guard, composed of twenty-five thousand elite troops, was not involved in the Battle of Borodino: Bonaparte refused to use them, giving various pretexts. Contrary to custom, he kept away from the firing, and could not follow the maneuvers with his own eyes. He sat or walked about close to a redoubt taken the previous day: when he was told of the death of one of his generals, he made a gesture of resignation. This display of impassiveness caused some astonishment; Ney exclaimed: '*What's he doing behind the army? There, only reverses reach him, not success. Since he no longer wages war on his own behalf, and is no longer a general, since he wants to play the Emperor everywhere, let him return to the Tuileries and leave us to be generals on his behalf.*' Murat swore that on that great day he no longer recognized Napoleon's genius.

Uncritical admirers have attributed Napoleon's torpor to the worsening of the illness from which, they assure us, he was then suffering; they affirm that he was often obliged to dismount, and would often remain motionless, his forehead pressed against a cannon. That may be so: a temporary indisposition may have contributed at that time to a lessening of his energy; but given that he regained that energy in his campaign in Saxony and his famous campaign in France, one needs to find another explanation for his inaction at Borodino. What! You confess in your bulletin that *it would have been easy to maneuver and force the enemy to abandon his excellent position; but that would have delayed the action*; and you, who had enough *mental agility* to condemn so many thousands of our soldiers to death, you had not the physical strength to order your Guard even to go to their aid? There can be no other explanation of this than the very nature of the man: adversity had arrived; its first touch chilled him. Napoleon's greatness was not of that quality which thrives on misfortune; only success left him in full possession of his faculties: he was not made for disaster.

## BOOK XXI

### CHAPTER 4

The French advance – Rostopchin – Bonaparte on Salutation Hill – The View of Moscow – Napoleon enters the Kremlin – The Burning of Moscow – Bonaparte reaches the Petrovsky Palace with difficulty – Rostopchin's proclamation – A halt among the ruins of Moscow – Bonaparte's pastimes

Between the Moskva and Moscow, Murat joined battle outside Mojaïsk. The town was entered: ten thousand dead and dying were found there; the dead were thrown through the windows to make room for the living. The Russians fell back in good order towards Moscow.

On the evening of the 13th of September, Kutuzov had summoned a council of war: all his generals declared that '*Moscow was not the motherland.*' Buturlin (*Histoire de la campagne de Russie*), the same officer whom Alexander sent to the Duc d'Angoulême's headquarters in Spain, and Barclay in his *Mémoire justificatif*, give the reasons which motivated the council's opinion. Kutuzov proposed a ceasefire to the King of Naples, while the Russian soldiers passed through the ancient capital of the Tsars. The ceasefire was agreed, since the French wanted to preserve the city intact; Murat alone pressed the enemy rear-guard hard, and our grenadiers trod in the footsteps of the retreating Russian grenadiers. But Napoleon was far from the success which he thought to be within reach: behind Kutuzov was Rostopchin.

Count Rostopchin was the Governor of Moscow. His vengeance promised to drop from heaven: a huge balloon, constructed at great expense, was to float above the French army, pick out the Emperor among his thousands, and fall on his head in a shower of fire and steel. In trial, the wings of the airship broke; forcing him to renounce his bombshell from the clouds; but Rostopchin kept the flares. The news of the disaster at Borodino had reached Moscow while the rest of the Empire was rejoicing over what one of Kutuzov's bulletins called a victory. Rostopchin issued various proclamations in rhythmic prose; he said:

*'Come, my friends the Muscovites, let us march too! We'll gather a hundred thousand men, we'll take an icon of the Holy Virgin, and a hundred and fifty cannon, and put an end to all this.'*

He advised the inhabitants to arm themselves simply with pitchforks, since a Frenchman weighed no more than a sheaf of corn.

We know that Rostopchin later denied all part in the burning of Moscow; we also know that Alexander never commented on the matter. Did Rostopchin wish to avoid the reproaches of the merchants and nobles whose fortunes had perished? Was Alexander afraid of being called *a Barbarian* by the Institute? This is such a wretched age, and Bonaparte had monopolized all its splendors to such a degree, that when something worthy happened, everyone repudiated it and disclaimed all responsibility.

The burning of Moscow remains a historic decision which preserved the freedom of one nation and contributed to the liberation of several others. Numantia has not lost its right to the admiration of mankind. What matter that Moscow burned! Had it not been burnt seven times before? Is it not brilliantly restored today, despite Napoleon's twenty-first bulletin prophesying *that the burning of its capital would put Russia back a hundred years?* '*Moscow's very misfortune,*' as Madame de Staël so admirably said, '*regenerated the Empire: that holy city perished like a martyr whose blood once shed grants new strength to the brothers who survive him.*' (*Dix années d'exil*)

Where would the nations be, if Bonaparte, from the heights of the Kremlin, had covered the world with his despotism as if with a funeral pall? The rights of the human race are supreme. For myself, if the world were a combustible globe, I would not hesitate to set fire to it if it were a question of freeing my country. Nevertheless, it takes nothing less than the superior interests of human liberty for a Frenchman, his head covered in mourning and his eyes full of tears, to bring himself to speak of a decision which proved fatal to so many Frenchmen.

Count Rostopchin, an educated and spiritual man, has been to Paris: in his writings, his thoughts are hidden beneath a certain buffoonery; he was a sort of civilized Barbarian, an ironic even depraved poet, capable of generous inclinations, while scornful of nations and kings: Gothic churches admit grotesque decorations amidst their grandeur.

The rout of Moscow had begun; the roads to Kazan were covered with fugitives, on foot, in carriages, alone or accompanied by servants.

An omen had momentarily raised everyone's spirits: a vulture was caught in the chains which supported the cross on the principal church; Rome, like Moscow, would have seen Napoleon's captivity in that omen.

With the arrival of long convoys of wounded Russians at the city gates, all hope evaporated. Kutuzov had promised Rostopchin that he would defend the city with the ninety-one thousand men left to him: you have read how the council of war obliged him to retreat. Rostopchin remained alone.

Night fell: messengers knocked mysteriously on every door, announcing that all must leave, that Nineveh was doomed. Inflammable material was piled in public buildings and markets, in shops and private houses; fire-fighting equipment was removed. Then Rostopchin ordered the prisons to be opened: from a filthy gang of prisoners a Russian and a Frenchman were brought forward; the Russian, a member of a sect of German *Illuminati*, was accused of attempting to betray his country and of having translated the French proclamation; his father ran up; the Governor granted him a few moments to bless his son: '*Me, bless a traitor!*' the old Muscovite cried, and cursed him instead. The prisoner was handed to the people and killed.

*'As for you,' Rostopchin said to the Frenchman, 'you were right to desire your countrymen's arrival: go free. Tell your comrades that there was only a single traitor in all of Russia, and he has been punished.'*

The other malefactors who were released, were given, with their freedom, orders to set the city on fire, when the moment arrived. Rostopchin was the last to leave Moscow, as a ship's captain is last over the side in a shipwreck.

Napoleon, on horseback, had joined the vanguard. One height remained to be crossed; it overlooked Moscow as Montmartre does Paris; it was called Salutation Hill, because the Russians prayed there in sight of their holy city, as the pilgrims do on catching sight of Jerusalem. Moscow of the gilded cupolas, as the Slav poets say, shone in the sunlight, with its two hundred and ninety-five churches, its fifteen hundred castles, its wooden houses in yellow, green and pink: it lacked only cypress trees and the Bosphorus.



The Kremlin formed part of this mass, covered with polished and painted metal. Amongst elegant villas of brick and marble, the Moskva flowed through parks planted with fir, the palm-trees of that region: Venice in the days of its glory was not more brilliant, rising from the Adriatic waves. It was at two in the afternoon, on the 14th of September, that Bonaparte, by the light of a sun glittering with polar diamonds, saw his new conquest. Moscow, like a European princess at the edge of his Empire, adorned with all the riches of Asia, seemed there for marriage with Napoleon.

Shouts rose: '*Moscow! Moscow!*' cried our soldiers; they clapped their hands yet again; in the days of our past glory, in victory or defeat, they were wont to shout: '*Longue vie au roi!*' '*It was a wonderful moment,*' says Lieutenant-Colonel de Baudus, '*that in which the magnificent panorama presented by the whole of that immense city suddenly offered itself to my gaze. I will always remember the emotion that manifested itself in ranks of the Polish division; it struck me especially in that it was revealed in an impulsive moment of religious feeling. On seeing Moscow, whole regiments threw themselves to their knees and thanked the God of Armies for having led them in victory to the capital of their bitterest enemy.*'

The acclamation ceased; they descended silently towards the city; no deputation emerged from the gates to present the keys in a silver bowl. All signs of life had been suspended in that great city. Moscow fell mute before the stranger: three days later she had vanished; the Circassian of the North, the beautiful intended, had lain down on her funeral pyre.

While the city was still standing, Napoleon, marching towards it, cried: '*So, this is the famous city!* and he gazed: Moscow, abandoned, resembled the city mourned over in Lamentations. Eugène and Poniatowski had already climbed the walls; some of our officers entered the city; they returned to tell Napoleon: '*Moscow is deserted!*' – *Moscow deserted, that's unlikely! Bring me the boyars.*' There were no boyars, only a few beggars in hiding. The streets were abandoned, the windows shuttered: no smoke rose from the houses from which torrents would soon pour. There was not the slightest sound. Bonaparte shrugged his shoulders.

Murat, advancing as far as the Kremlin, was greeted with howls of fury from the prisoners set free in order to defend their country: he was forced to blast the gates open with cannon.

Napoleon was taken to the Dorogomilov Gate; he installed himself in one of the first houses in the suburb, took a ride along the Moskva, and saw no one. He returned to his quarters and appointed Marshal Mortier Governor of Moscow, General Durosnel Commandant, and Monsieur de Lesseps, in his capacity as Quarter-Master General, as Head of Administration. The Imperial Guard and the troops were in full-dress to parade before the absent populace. Bonaparte soon learnt that the city was positively threatened with disaster. At two in the morning he was told that a fire had broken out. The conqueror left the Dorogomilov suburb and took shelter in the Kremlin: this was on the morning of the 15th of October. He experienced an instant of joy on entering Peter the Great's Palace; his pride assuaged he wrote a few words to Alexander, by the light of the bazaar which had just caught fire, just as the defeated Alexander had previously written to him from the field of Austerlitz.

In the bazaar long rows of locked and shuttered shops could be seen. At first the fire was contained; but during the second night it broke out everywhere; star-shells hurled into the air by rockets burst and fell in sheaves of light over the palaces and churches. A fierce northerly drove the sparks before it and scattered

flakes of fire over the Kremlin: it contained a powder magazine; an artillery-park had been left under Bonaparte's very windows. Our soldiers were driven from quarter to quarter by the eruptions from the volcano. *Gorgons* and *Medusas*, torch in hand, rushed through the livid crossroads of this inferno; others poked the fires with spears of tarred wood. Bonaparte, in the halls of this new *Pergamos*, rushed to the windows, crying: '*What amazing resolution! What people! They are Scythians!*'

A rumor spread that the Kremlin was mined: servants discovered they were ill, while the soldiers resigned themselves to their fate. The mouths of the various fires outside grew wider, approached each other, and met: the tower of the Arsenal, like a tall taper, burnt in the midst of a blazing sanctuary. The Kremlin was nothing but a black island against which broke a sea awash with fire. The sky, reflecting the glow, seemed as if traversed by the flickering lights of the aurora borealis.

The third night fell; one could scarcely breathe in the suffocating atmosphere: twice fuses had been attached to the building housing Napoleon. How to escape? The flames had merged blocking the gates of the citadel. After searching around, a postern was found leading to the Moskva. The conqueror and his retinue slipped away through this exit to safety. Around him in the city, arches were collapsing with a roar, and belfries from which showers of molten metal poured, were leaning, breaking and falling. Beams, rafters and roofs, cracking, sparking, and crumbling, plunged into a *Phlegethon* whose burning waves they sent leaping in a million golden spangles. Bonaparte made his escape over the cold embers of a district already reduced to ashes: he gained *Petrovsky*, the Tsar's palace.

*General Gourgaud*, criticising *Monsieur Ségur*'s work, accuses the Emperor's orderly of being in error: indeed, it seems proven, by *Monsieur de Baudus*' narrative, he being aide-de-camp to *Marshal Bessières*, and who himself acted as guide to Napoleon, that the latter did not escape by a postern, but left by the main doorway of the Kremlin. From the shores of St Helena, Napoleon recalled the Scythian city in flames: '*Never,*' he said, '*despite all their poetry, could the fictional accounts of the burning of Troy equal the reality of that of Moscow.*'

Remembering that catastrophe later, Bonaparte further wrote: '*My evil genius appeared, to announce my destiny, which I met with on the Island of Elba.*' Kutuzov had first set out towards the east; then he fell back towards the south. His night march was partially lit by the distant fires of Moscow, from which rose a dismal noise; one would have said that the great bell, which had never in fact been mounted because of its immense weight, had been magically suspended at the summit of a burning steeple to sound the death-knell. Kutuzov reached *Voronovo*, *Count Rostopchin*'s estate; scarcely had he set eyes on that splendid residence when it vanished in the depths of a fresh conflagration. On the iron door of the church one could read this inscription, the *scritta morta* (last words), from the proprietor's hand: '*I have improved this land for eighteen years, and lived here happily in the bosom of my family; the inhabitants of this place, to the number of seventeen hundred and twenty, have left at your approach, and I have set fire to my house so that it might not be soiled by your presence. Frenchmen, I have left you my two houses in Moscow with contents worth half a million roubles. Here you will find nothing but ashes.*'

*ROSTOPCHIN.*

Bonaparte at first had admired the Scythian fires as a spectacle that suited his imaginings; but soon the evil which that catastrophe had worked on him chilled him and made him revert to his abusive diatribes. Sending *Rostopchin*'s letter to France, he added: '*Rostopchin seems insane; the Russians consider him a*

kind of Marat.' He who does not understand greatness in others will not comprehend it on his own behalf when the time for sacrifice arrives.

Alexander understood adversity without becoming despondent. 'Retreat,' he wrote, 'when Europe encourages us with its regard! Let us serve it as an example; let us salute the hand which chose us to be first among nations in the cause of virtue and liberty.' An invocation to the Lord on High follows.

A style in which the words God, virtue and liberty are found is powerful: it pleases men, reassures and consoles them; how superior it is to those affected phrases, sadly imprinted with pagan locutions, and Turkish fatalism: *it was to be, they had to be, fatality has overcome them!* sterile phraseology, always idle, even when applied to the greatest of actions.

Leaving Moscow during the night of the 15th of September, Napoleon re-entered it on the 18th. While returning he had come across camp-fires burning in the mud, fed with mahogany furniture and gilded paneling. Around these fires in the open air were blackened, mud-stained soldiers, dressed in rags, lying on silk sofas or sitting in velvet armchairs, with Kashmir shawls, Siberian furs, or golden fabrics from Paris as carpets, in the mud, beneath their feet, and eating blackened paste, or the blood-stained flesh of dead horses, from silver dishes.

Irregular looting having started, it was regularized; each regiment fell upon the quarry in turn. Peasants driven from their huts, Cossacks, and enemy deserters, roamed around the French camps and fed on whatever our squads had left behind. Everything that could be carried away was taken; soon, overloaded with their spoils, our soldiers threw them away, on happening to remember that they were fifteen hundred miles from home.

The expeditions they undertook, searching for provisions, produced some pathetic scenes: one French squad brought back a cow; a woman approached them, accompanied by a man carrying a child of a few months old in his arms; they pointed to the cow that had just been taken from them. The mother tore at the wretched clothes covering her breasts, to show she had no milk left; the father made a gesture as if to break the child's head on a stone. The officer made his men return the cow, and he adds: 'The effect this scene had on my soldiers was such that, for a long time, not a single word was spoken in the ranks.'

Bonaparte's dreams had altered; he announced that he wished to march on St Petersburg; he had already mapped out the route; he explained the excellence of his new plan, the certainty of entering the empire's second capital: 'What had he to do from now on with ruins? Was it not sufficiently glorious for him to have been enthroned in the Kremlin?' Such were Napoleon's fresh fantasies; the man touched madness, but his dreams were still those of a great spirit.

'We are only fifteen day's march from St Petersburg,' says Monsieur Fain: 'Napoleon thinks of falling back towards that capital.' Instead of fifteen day's march, at that time, in those circumstances, one ought to say two months. General Gourgaud adds that all the information from St Petersburg indicated fear regarding Napoleon's movements. It is certain that in St Petersburg no one doubted his victory if he appeared; but they prepared to leave him the carcass of a second city, and a retreat to Archangel was planned. You cannot subjugate a nation whose final citadel is the Pole. Moreover the English fleet, penetrating the Baltic in the spring, would simply have destroyed St Petersburg once taken.

But while Bonaparte's unbridled imagination toyed with the idea of an expedition to St Petersburg, he was seriously occupied with the contrary idea: his belief in his dreams was not such as to rob him of all good sense. His dominating thought was to carry a peace treaty to Paris signed in Moscow. In that way he would avoid the dangers of a retreat, he would have accomplished an astonishing feat, and he would return to the Tuileries olive branch in hand. After the first note he had written to Alexander on arriving at the Kremlin, he had neglected the opportunity of renewing his advances. In an affable discussion with a Russian field officer, Monsieur de Toutelmine, assistant director of the Foundlings Hospital in Moscow, a hospital miraculously spared by the fire, he had let slip words favorable to reaching an accommodation. Through Monsieur Jacowleff, brother of the former Russian Minister in Stuttgart, he wrote directly to Alexander, and Monsieur Jacowleff undertook to hand this letter to the Tsar personally. Finally General Lauriston was sent to Kutuzov: the latter promised his good offices towards a peace negotiation; but he refused to grant General Lauriston a safe-conduct for St Petersburg.

Napoleon remained convinced that he exercised the same power over Alexander that he had exercised at Tilsit and Erfurt, and yet, on the 21st of October Alexander wrote to Prince Michael Larcanowitz: *'I learn, to my extreme dissatisfaction, that General Bennigsen has met with the King of Naples... All the specifics contained in the orders which were addressed to you by myself should have convinced you that my resolution is unshakeable, and that at this time no proposal by the enemy could commit me to terminating the war, and so weakening the sacred duty of avenging the motherland.'*

The Russian generals took advantage of the self-esteem and naivety, of Murat, who commanded the vanguard; continually delighted by the Cossacks' attentiveness, he borrowed jewels from his officers to give them as presents to his courtiers from the Don; but the Russian generals, far from desiring peace, dreaded it. Despite Alexander's resolve, they knew their Emperor's weakness, and feared the persuasiveness of ours. In order to achieve vengeance, it was merely a matter of gaining a month, in order to await the first frost: the Muscovite Christians' prayers were supplications to heaven to bring on the storms.

General Wilson arrived, in his capacity as English emissary to the Russian Army; he had already crossed Bonaparte's path in Egypt. Fabvier, for his part, had rejoined our army of the north from that of the south. The English urged Kutuzov to attack, and everyone knew that the news Fabvier brought was far from good. At two ends of Europe, the two nations who alone fought for their freedom, threatened the head of Moscow's conqueror. No reply came from Alexander; the French troops lingered; Napoleon's anxiety grew; the peasants warned our soldiers: *'You don't know our climate,'* they said, *'in a month's time the cold will make your nails drop off.'* Milton, whose great fame embellishes everything, in his *Brief History of Moscovia*, says, as naively, that it is: *'so cold in winter, that the very sap of their wood fuel burning on the fire, freezes at the brand's end, where it drops.'*

Bonaparte, believing that one reverse step would lesson his prestige and cause the fear of his name to evaporate, could not bring himself to back down: despite the warnings of imminent peril, he remained there, waiting all the while for a reply from St Petersburg; he, who had conducted himself with such contempt, sighed for a few wretched words from the defeated. In the Kremlin he occupied himself with regulations for the Comédie-Française; he spent three evenings completing this majestic work; with his aides he discussed the merit of some new verses received from Paris; those around him admired the great man's *sang-froid*, while the wounded from his latest battles were still dying in terrible pain, and while, by

delaying a few more days, he condemned to death the hundred thousand men who remained. The servile stupidity of the age tries to pass this pitiful affectation off as the design of an incommensurable spirit.

Bonaparte toured the Kremlin buildings. He descended and then re-ascended the staircase on which Peter the Great had the Strelitz guards murdered; he walked up and down the banquet hall where Peter had the prisoners assembled, lashing out at the head of one of them between each glass, proposing to his guests, princes and ambassadors, to divert themselves in the same way. Men were then broken on the wheel, and women buried alive; they hung two thousand of the Strelitz whose bodies were left dangling from the walls.

Instead of instructions regarding the theatre, Bonaparte would have done better to write to the Senate (Conservateur) the letter which Peter wrote to the Moscow Senate from the banks of the Pruth: *'I announce to you, that misled by bad advice, and without it being my fault, I find my camp here surrounded by a force four times larger than mine. If I am taken, you are no longer to consider me as your lord and Tsar, nor to take account of any order which may be sent to you in my name, even if you recognize it as being in my own hand. If I perish, you must choose the worthiest of you as my successor.'*

A note of Napoleon's addressed to Cambacérès contained unintelligible orders: there was some deliberation, and though the signature on the note was a lengthened form of a classical name, the writing being recognized as Bonaparte's, it was decreed that the unintelligible orders be executed.

The Kremlin contains a Double Throne for a pair of brothers: Napoleon chose not to share his. In one of the rooms a stretcher could be seen, shattered by a cannonball, on which the wounded Charles XII had been carried at the Battle of Pultava. Always eclipsed in the ranks of generous feeling, did Bonaparte remember, on visiting the tombs of the Tsars, that on feast-days they were covered with magnificent palls; that when a subject had some favor to solicit, he laid his petition on one of the tombs, and only the Tsar had the right to remove it?

These requests of the unfortunate, presented by death to majesty, were not to Napoleon's taste. He was occupied with other cares; partly out of a desire for deception, partly because it was his nature, he planned, as he did on leaving Egypt, to summon actors to Moscow, and he declared that an Italian singer would be arriving. He despoiled the Kremlin churches, filled his wagons with sacred ornaments and icons, along with the crescents and horse-tails captured from the Mohammedans. He had the huge cross taken down from Ivan the Great's bell-tower; his plan was to install it on the dome of the Invalides: it would have complemented the masterpieces of the Vatican with which he had adorned the Louvre. While they were detaching this cross, crows flew about it cawing: *'What do those birds want with me?'* Bonaparte asked.

The fatal moment approached: Daru raised objections to various plans sketched out by Bonaparte: *'What path should we take, then?'* the Emperor exclaimed. – *'Remain here; turn Moscow into a vast fortified camp; spend the winter here; salt down the horses that we are unable to feed; and wait for spring: our reinforcements and the Lithuanian army will relieve us and complete the conquest.'* – *'That's a lion's counsel,'* replied Napoleon; *but what would Paris say? France will not countenance my absence.'* – *'What do they say of me in Athens?'* Alexander the Great would ask.

He plunged again into uncertainty: should he go, or should he stay? He was unsure. Countless deliberations followed. Finally a skirmish at Vinkovo, on the 18th of October, persuaded him to leave the ruins of Moscow with his army: that same day, without fuss or noise, without a backward look, wishing to avoid the direct route to Smolensk, he took one of the two roads to Kaluga.

For thirty-five days, like those fearsome African serpents that sleep when they have dined, he had lost sight of himself: this it would seem was the time needed to alter the fate of such a man. During that period the star of his destiny sank in the sky. At last he awoke, caught between winter and a burned-out capital; he slipped away from ruin: it was too late; a hundred thousand men were condemned to die. Marshal Mortier, commanding the rear-guard, was ordered, on his retreat, to blow up the Kremlin.

## BOOK XXI

### CHAPTER 5

#### Retreat

Bonaparte, deceiving himself or wishing to deceive others, wrote a letter to the Duc de Bassano, on the 18th of October, reproduced by Monsieur Fain: *'By the end of the first few weeks of November,'* he writes, *'I will have brought my troops back to the square bounded by Smolensk, Mohilov, Minsk and Vitebsk. I am decided on this maneuver, since Moscow is no longer a position of military value; I am about to locate another, more favorable to the start of the next campaign. Operations will then be directed towards Petersburg and Kiev.'* A pitiful boast, if it were merely a question of gaining acceptance for a lie; but with Bonaparte, the idea of conquest, despite being contrary to all logic, always offered the possibility of being honest.

They retreated towards Maloyaroslavets: due to the volume of baggage and badly-harnessed vehicles, after three days march they were still only thirty miles from Moscow. They intended to outpace Kutuzov: indeed Prince Eugène's vanguard reached Fominskoe before him. There were still a hundred thousand infantrymen left when the retreat began. The cavalry was almost non-existent apart from the three thousand five hundred Horse-guards. Our troops, having reached the new road to Kaluga on the 21st of October, entered Borowsk on the 22nd, and on the 23rd Delzons' division occupied Maloyaroslavets. Napoleon was delighted; he thought they had escaped.

On the 23rd of October at half-past one in the morning, the earth shook: a hundred and eighty three thousand pounds of gunpowder, placed beneath the Kremlin, tore apart the palace of the Tsars. Mortier, who blew up the Kremlin, was destined to meet Fieschi's *infernal machine*. What worlds passed between those two explosions, in time and among men!

After this deafening roar, a loud cannonade sounded through the silence, from the direction of Maloyaroslavets: to the same degree that Napoleon had longed to hear this noise on entering Russia, he dreaded hearing it on leaving. An aide-de-camp to the Viceroy announced a Russian general attack: during the night Compans and Gérard arrived to assist Prince Eugène. Many men perished on both sides; the enemy managed to ride along the Kaluga Road and completely shut off access to the route we had hoped to follow. There was no option but to fall back on the road to Mojaïsk and re-enter Smolensk along the track of our previous misfortune.

Napoleon stayed that night at Gorodnia, in a humble house where the officers attached to various generals were unable to find shelter. They gathered under Bonaparte's window; it lacked curtains or shutters; light could be seen escaping, while the officers who remained outside were plunged in darkness. Napoleon was sitting in his little room, his head bowed on his hands; Murat, Berthier, and Bessièrès stood near him, silent and motionless. He gave no orders, and mounted his horse on the morning of the 25th of October, in order to inspect the Russian army's positions.

He had barely left when a cascade of Cossacks swept almost to his feet. The living avalanche had crossed the Luzh, and had been hidden from sight, at the edge of a wood. Everyone drew his sword, including the Emperor. If these marauders had been possessed of greater courage, Bonaparte would have been captured. In the burning town of Maloyaroslavets, the streets were strewn with bodies, half-charred, slashed, crushed; mutilated by the wheels of the guns, which had passed over them. In order to continue the push

towards Kaluga, it had been necessary to fight a second battle; the Emperor considered it inappropriate. There amounts to a disagreement in this regard between the supporters of Bonaparte and the friends of the Marshals. Who gave the advice to pursue once more the original route taken by the French? Evidently it was Napoleon: it cost him little to pronounce great and fatal judgements; he was used to it.

Returning to Borowsk next day, on the 26th, near to Vereia, General Wintzingerode and his aide-de-camp Count Nariskin were brought before the leader of our armies: they had been caught entering Moscow prematurely. Bonaparte lost his temper: '*Let them shoot this general!*' he shouted, beside himself: '*he is a deserter from the Kingdom of Wurtemberg; it belongs to the Confederation of the Rhine.*' He poured out invective against the Russian nobility and ended with these words: '*I will go to St Petersburg, I will hurl that city into the Neva.*', and suddenly he ordered the burning of a castle that could be seen on the heights: the wounded lion lashing out, foaming, at everything around him.

Nevertheless, in the midst of his wild anger, while he was giving Mortier the order to destroy the Kremlin, he obeyed, at the same moment, his double nature; he wrote to that same Duke of Treviso in sentimental phrases; aware that his missives would become known, he urged him with paternal tenderness to save the hospitals; '*since that is how,*' he added, '*I treated Saint-Jean-d'Acre.*' Now, in Palestine, he had the Turkish prisoners shot, and with no opposition from Desgenettes, he poisoned the sick! Berthier and Murat saved Prince Wintzingerode.

Kutuzov however pursued us sluggishly. When Wilson urged the Russian general to act, the general replied: '*Let the snows come.*' On the 29th of October, they reached the Moskva's fatal heights: a shout of grief and surprise escaped our army. A vast slaughterhouse was revealed, displaying forty thousand corpses in varying stages of decay. The orderly rows of bodies still seemed to maintain military discipline; detached skeletons in front, on levelled hillocks, indicated the officers and dominated the ranks of dead. Everywhere were broken weapons, shattered drums, fragments of cuirasses and uniforms, and torn standards, scattered among the trunks of trees cut down by cannonballs a few feet from the ground; it was the Grand Redoubt of Borodino.

At the heart of this motionless destruction something was seen moving: a French soldier who had lost both legs made his way through this cemetery which seemed to have disgorged its entrails. The body of a horse brought down by a shell had served to nourish this soldier: he lived there, gnawing away at his cave of flesh; the putrefying flesh of the dead nearby served him in place of bandages to dress his wounds and ointment to soothe his stumps. The terrifying remorse that glory brings dragged itself towards Napoleon: Napoleon did not linger.

The silence of the soldiers, hurrying away from cold, hunger and the enemy, was profound; they thought they might soon resemble those comrades whose remains they could see. Amongst the remnant nothing could be heard but heaving breath and the involuntary tremor of noise from battalions in retreat.

Further on was the Abbey of Kotloskoy which had been turned into a hospital; all medical assistance was lacking: there was only enough life left there to witness death. Bonaparte, reaching the place, burnt the wood of his shattered wagons. When the army took to the road again, those in mortal agony rose in order to reach the threshold of their last sanctuary, allowing themselves to collapse on the roadway, holding out their failing arms to their comrades who were departing: they seemed at the same time to entreat them and seek to delay them.



At every instant the sound of explosions rang out from the ammunition boxes they had been forced to abandon. The camp-followers flung the dying into the ditches. The Russian prisoners, who were being escorted by foreigners in the French service, were dispatched by their guards: executed in a regular manner, their brains were spilled from their skulls. Bonaparte had led all Europe all along with him; every language was spoken in his army; every manner of cockade and flag could be seen there. Italians, forced to fight, were defeated with the French; Spaniards had maintained their reputation for courage: Naples and Andalusia were for them no more than the regret for a sweet dream. It is said that Bonaparte was only defeated by Europe in its entirety, and that is fair; but the fact is forgotten that Bonaparte only conquered with Europe's aid, with force or willingness as his allies.

Russia alone resisted a Europe led by Napoleon; France, alone and defended by Napoleon, fell to a Europe in a different mode; but it should be said that Russia was defended by her climate, and that Europe marched regretfully behind its master. France, on the contrary, was defended neither by its climate nor its decimated population; it had only courage and the remembrance of glory.

Indifferent to his soldiers' miseries, Bonaparte was only concerned with his own interests: in camp, his conversation turned to those ministers who had sold themselves, he said, to the English, ministers who had fomented this war; unwilling to confess that this war was his responsibility alone. The Duke of Vicenza who persisted in bringing trouble upon himself by his noble conduct, indulged in an outburst, faced with the flattery prevalent in their bivouac. He shouted: '*What atrocious cruelty! So this is the civilization we have brought Russia!*' To Bonaparte's amazed retort, he made a gesture of anger and incredulity and withdrew. That man whom the least contradiction sent into fits of fury tolerated Caulaincourt's rudeness in expiation of the letter he had once made him carry to Ettenheim. When you have committed an action deserving of reproach, heaven in punishment imposes witnesses on you: it was vain for the tyrants of the ancient world to make them vanish; descending to the underworld, those witnesses entered the bodies of *Furies* and returned.

Passing through Gjatsk, Napoleon pressed forward to Viasma; he carried on beyond, not having met with the enemy he feared he might encounter there. On the 3rd of November he reached Slavkovo: there he learnt that a battle had been fought at Viasma against Miloradovich's troops, fatal to us: our soldiers, our officers, wounded, arms in slings, heads swathed in bandages, in a miracle of valor, threw themselves at the enemy cannon.

These successive actions in familiar places, these layers of dead upon dead, these battles echoed by other battles, would have doubly immortalized these fatal fields, if oblivion had not swiftly cloaked our dust. Who thinks of those countrymen left behind in Russia? Are those rustics content to have been *at the great battle beneath the walls of Moscow*? Perhaps only I on autumn evenings, watching birds from the North flying high in the sky, recall having seen the grave of our compatriots. Industrial companies have transported their cauldrons and furnaces into the wilderness; the bones have been converted into animal-black: whether from dog or man, varnish fetches the same price, and gleams no less brightly for being produced from the obscure or the glorious. There you see the respect we have for the dead these days! Behold the sacred rites of the new religion! *Diis Manibus: to the gods of the shades*. Fortunate companions of Charles XII, you were not visited by these sacrilegious hyenas! In winter the ermine appears among your virginal snows and in summer the flowering mosses of Pultava.

On the 6th of November 1812 the thermometer fell to eighteen degrees (Réaumur) below zero: everything vanished under a blanket of snow. The soldiers lacking boots felt their feet dying; their muskets, whose very touch burnt, fell from their stiff purple fingers; their hair bristled with hoar-frost, their beards with their frozen breath; their wretched clothes turned into frosty cassocks. They fell, and the snow covered them; they formed little ridges of graves on the ground. No one knew which way the rivers flowed; they had to break the ice to discover the direction to take. Lost in the wilderness, the various army corps lit fires to signal to and recognize one another, as ships in peril fire cannon in their distress. The fir-trees were transformed into motionless crystal, rising up here and there, candelabra at these obsequies. Crows, and packs of master-less white dogs, followed this procession of corpses, at a distance.

It was galling, after each day's march, to be obliged, at some deserted halt, to take the precautions suited to a strong, well-equipped host, to post sentries; occupy key positions, and station pickets. During the sixteen hour nights, battered by gusts from the north, our troops did not know where to sit or lie down; the trees chopped down with all their alabaster coating, refused to catch fire; to melt a little snow was as much as they could manage, and then mix a spoonful of rye-flour into it. They were no sooner stretched out on the frozen ground than Cossack howls echoed through the woods; the enemy's light artillery rumbled; our soldiers' fast was saluted like a banquet at which kings sit down to dine; cannon-balls rolled among the famished guests like loaves of iron. At dawn, which was barely followed by daybreak, the beat of a frost-coated drum, or a hoarse note from a trumpet could be heard: nothing could have been sadder than this mournful reveille, calling to arms warriors whom it could no longer rouse. The growing light revealed circles of infantrymen dead and frozen around extinguished fires.

A few survivors remained; they advanced, towards unknown horizons which, ever-receding, vanished into the fog at every step. Under a shivering sky, as if weary of last night's storms, our thinning ranks crossed region after region, forest on forest, in which an Ocean seemed to have left its foam among the disheveled branches of the birch-trees. Among these woods there was not even a sign of that sad little bird of winter who sings, like me, among the leafless bushes. If I suddenly find myself again, by analogy, in the presence of former days, oh my comrades (soldiers are all brothers), your sufferings too recall my youth, when, retreating in advance of your track, I, so wretched and abandoned, journeyed over the heath-land of the Ardennes.

The Russian Grand Army followed ours: the latter was organized in several divisions sub-divided into columns: Prince Eugène commanded the vanguard, Napoleon the center, Marshal Ney the rear-guard. Hindered by various obstacles and skirmishes, these corps failed to keep a distance between them: sometimes they overtook one another; sometimes they marched on a parallel course, often without seeing each other or being able to communicate, through lack of cavalry. The Tartars, riding small ponies whose manes swept the ground, gave our soldiers harassed by these gadflies of the snow no rest, day or night. The landscape was changing: where a river had been visible, one found a torrent suspended by bonds of ice from the steep sides of its ravine. *'In a single night,' Bonaparte writes (Records of St Helena), 'we lost thirty thousand horses: we were forced to abandon almost all the artillery, still five hundred pieces strong; we could take neither munitions nor provisions. For lack of horses, we could not carry out any reconnaissance, nor send cavalry forward to reconnoiter the route. The soldiers lost their courage and their wits, and fell, in the confusion. The slightest set-back alarmed them. Four or five men were enough to fill a whole battalion with dread. Instead of keeping together, they wandered off separately seeking the nearest fire. Those who were sent ahead, as scouts, abandoned their task, and went to some house, in*

*order to find the means to warm themselves. They spread out on all sides, estranged from their corps, and easily fell prey to the enemy. Others fell asleep, lying on the ground: a little blood flowed from their nostrils, and they died while sleeping. Thousands of soldiers perished. The Poles saved some of their horses, and a small amount of artillery; but the French and the soldiers of other nations were not the same men. The cavalry suffered most particularly. Of forty thousand men I do not believe three thousand were allowed to escape.'*

And you, who recounted this under the glittering sun of another hemisphere, were you merely a witness to all this wretchedness?

On that very day (the 6th of November) when the thermometer fell so low, the first courier seen for many a long day arrived like a lost screech-owl: he carried evil tidings of Malet's conspiracy. This conspiracy revealed something profound about Napoleon's fortunes. According to General Gourgaud, what made the most impression on the Emperor was the over-abundant proof '*that monarchical principles as applied to his monarchy had flung out such shallow roots that the great functionaries, at the news of the Emperor's death, had already forgotten that, the sovereign being dead, there was another left to succeed him.*'

Bonaparte on St Helena (Las Cases' Mémorial) remarked that he had said to his Court at the Tuileries, in speaking of Malet's conspiracy: '*Well, Gentlemen, you considered your revolution over; you thought me dead: but what of the King of Rome, your oaths, your principles, your doctrines? You make me shudder for the future!*' Bonaparte reasoned logically; it was a question of his dynasty: would he have found the reasoning as correct if it had been a question concerning Saint Louis' race?

Bonaparte learned of the Paris incident in the midst of the wilderness, among the ruins of an all but vanished army, whose blood the snow drank; Napoleon's rule rooted in force was annihilated in Russia along with his force, while a single man sufficed to cast it in doubt in the capital: without religion, justice, and liberty, there is no rule.

At almost the very moment that Bonaparte learned of what had happened in Paris, he received a letter from Marshal Ney. This letter informed him that: '*the best of the army were asking why they alone were fighting to protect the flight of the rest; why the eagle continued to protect and kill; why it was necessary to die in battalions, since there was nothing left to do but flee?*'

When Ney's aide-de-camp tried to go into the specific grievances, Bonaparte interrupted him: '*Colonel, I did not ask you for details.*' – This expedition to Russia was a foolish extravagance which all civil and military authorities within the Empire condemned: the victories and sufferings marked out by the route of their retreat discouraged and embittered the soldiers: in that path of ascent and descent, Napoleon might equally have found a symbol of the two segments of his life.

## BOOK XXI

### CHAPTER 6

#### Smolensk – The Retreat continued

On the 9th of November, they finally reached Smolensk. An order from Bonaparte forbade anyone entering prior to the sentry-posts being occupied by the Imperial Guard. The soldiers outside gathered at the foot of the walls; the soldiers inside held the gates closed. The air was rent by the imprecations of the excluded and desperate, dressed in dirty Cossack smocks, patched greatcoats, ragged cloaks and uniforms, blankets and horsecloths, their heads covered by caps, knotted handkerchiefs, battered shakos, and twisted and dented helmets; all this spattered with blood and snow, riddled with bullets or slashed by sabre-cuts. With haggard, drawn faces, and sombre glittering eyes, they gnashed their teeth and gazed up at the ramparts, with the air of those mutilated prisoners, who, under Louis the Fat, carried their amputated left hand in their right: they might have been taken for frenzied mourners or demented patients escaped from the madhouse. The Young and Old Guards arrived; they entered a city ravaged by fire on our previous visit. Shouts rose, aimed at the privileged band: *‘Will the army never have aught but their leavings?’* The famished cohorts ran wildly towards the shops as if in spectral insurrection; they were driven off and began fighting: the dead were left in the streets, the women and children, and the dying, in the carts. The air stank with the corruption of a multitude of decomposed corpses; some soldiers were touched with imbecility or madness; some with hair tangled or on end, blaspheming or shaking with crazed laughter, fell dead. Bonaparte vented his anger on a wretched supplier not a single of whose orders had been fulfilled.

This army of a hundred thousand men, reduced to thirty thousand, was accompanied by a band of fifty thousand camp-followers: there were only eighteen hundred mounted cavalry left. Napoleon gave their command to Monsieur de Latour-Mauborg. This officer, leading the cuirassiers in the attack on the Great Redoubt at Borodino had his head split open by sabre blows; later he lost a leg at Wachau. Seeing his orderly weeping, he said to him: *‘What are you moaning about? You’ll only have one boot to polish now.’* This general, remaining loyal to the unfortunate, has become tutor to Henri V during the first years of the young prince’s exile: I raise my hat when I pass him, as if I were passing honor incarnate.

They stayed in strength in Smolensk until the 14th of November. Napoleon ordered Marshal Ney to confer with Davout and destroy the place by blowing it apart with mines: as for himself, he went to Krasnoy, where he took up quarters on the 15th, after the place had been looted by the Russians. The Muscovite encirclement contracted: the Grand Army of Moldavia so called was nearby; it prepared to surround us completely and drive us into the Berezina.

The remainder of our battalions diminished from day to day. Kutuzov, told of our misery, barely stirred: *‘Leave your headquarters for a moment,’* Wilson exclaimed, *‘climb the heights; and you will see that Napoleon’s final moment has arrived. Russia claims its victim: it only needs us to strike; one charge will suffice; in two hours the face of Europe will be transformed.’*

It was true; but it would only have been Bonaparte who would have been stricken, and God wanted to set his seal more heavily on France.

Kutuzov replied: *‘I am going to rest my soldiers for three days; I would be ashamed, I would halt too, if they were short of bread for a single instant. I am escorting the French army as my prisoner; I punish*

*them whenever they want to stop, or stray from the primary route. The outcome of Napoleon's destiny is irrevocably set: it is in the marshes of the Berezina that the shooting star will be extinguished, in the presence of the whole Russian army. I shall have delivered Napoleon to them, weakened, disarmed, and dying: that is sufficient to ensure my glory.'*

Bonaparte had spoken of *old* Kutuzov with that insulting disdain of which he was so prodigal: old Kutuzov in turn traded him contempt for contempt.

Kutuzov's army was more impatient than its leader; the Cossacks themselves shouted: '*Will you let these skeletons escape from their tomb?*'

Meanwhile there was no sign of the fourth corps which ought to have left Smolensk on the 15th, and rejoined Napoleon on the 16th at Krasnoy; communications were cut; Prince Eugène, who led the retreat, tried in vain to re-establish them: all he could do, was to deflect the Russians and achieve a union with the Guard below Krasnoy, but still Marshals Davout and Ney did not appear.

Then, suddenly, Napoleon found his genius once more: he left Krasnoy on the 17th, baton in hand, at the head of his Guard, now reduced to thirteen thousand men, in order to confront his innumerable enemies, open the road to Smolensk, and clear a path for his Marshals. He only spoiled that action by recalling words inappropriate to his role: '*I have played the Emperor long enough: it is time I played the general.*' Henry IV, leaving for the siege of Amiens, said: '*I have played King of France long enough: it is time I played King of Navarre.*' The surrounding heights, at whose foot Napoleon marched, were full of artillery which could strike at any moment; he glanced at them and said: 'Let a squadron of my chasseurs take them!' The Russians had only to crush those below: their weight alone would have wiped them out; but, at the sight of the great man and the remnants of the Guard battalions formed up in squares, they remained motionless, in fascination; his gaze kept a hundred thousand men on the hilltops.

Kutuzov, on account of this encounter at Krasnoy, was honored in Petersburg with the title of *Smolenski*: apparently for not having given up hope, with Napoleon as Marshal, of the Republic's regard.

## BOOK XXI

### CHAPTER 7

#### Smolensk – The Crossing of the Berezina

After this vain effort, Napoleon re-crossed the Dnieper on the 19th of November 1812 and made camp at Orcha: there he burnt the papers he been carrying for the purpose of writing his biography during the tedious days of winter, if an intact Moscow had permitted him to remain there. He found himself compelled to have the enormous cross of St John thrown into the lake of Semlovo: it was retrieved by Cossacks and replaced on Ivan the Great's bell-tower.

At Orcha there was great anxiety: despite Napoleon's attempt to rescue Marshal Ney, he was still missing. News of him was at last received at Baranni: Eugène had managed to rejoin him. General Gourgaud tells of the pleasure Napoleon experienced at this, though the bulletins and the narratives of the Emperor's friends continue to express jealous reservations concerning all events in which he was not directly involved. The army's joy was promptly stifled; it passed from peril to peril. Bonaparte went from Kokhanov to Tolozcim, where an aide-de-camp told him of the loss of the bridgehead at Borisov, captured from General Dabrowski by the Army of Moldavia. The Army of Moldavia, in turn taken by surprise by the Duke of Reggio in Borisov, withdrew beyond the Berezina having destroyed the bridge. Chichagov thus found himself facing us, on the far bank of the river.

General Corbineau, commanding a brigade of our light cavalry, given information by a peasant, had discovered the ford of Veselovo below Borisov. At the news, Napoleon, on the evening of the 24th of November, sent Éblé and Chasseloup from Bobre with the pontoneers and sappers: they arrived at Studianka, on the Berezina, at the ford indicated.

Two bridges were built: an army of forty thousand Russians were camped on the opposite shore. Imagine the surprise of the French, when at daybreak they saw the river-bank deserted and the rear-guard of Chaplits' division in full retreat! They could not believe their eyes. A single cannonball, the heat from a Cossack's pipe, would have sufficed to shatter or set fire to Éblé's frail pontoons. Someone ran to alert Bonaparte; he rose in haste, went out, looked, and cried out: 'I have deceived the Admiral!' The exclamation was natural; the Russians failed to finish things and committed a mistake which may have prolonged the war by three years; but their leader had not been deceived. Admiral Chichagov was well aware; it was simply the casual nature of his character: though intelligent and spirited, he liked his comforts; he always feared the cold, stayed in the warmth, and thought he would have plenty of time to exterminate the French when he was thoroughly heated; he yielded to his temperament. Now retired to London, having relinquished his fortune and renounced Russia, Chichagov has provided several intriguing articles on the 1812 Campaign to the Quarterly Review: he seeks to excuse himself, his compatriots reply; it is a Russian quarrel. Alas! Though Bonaparte, by the construction of those two bridges and the incomprehensible retreat by Chaplits' division, was saved, the French were not: two other Russian armies came together on the river-bank Napoleon was preparing to leave. Here, one who did not see it should be silent, to allow the witnesses to speak.

*'The devotion of the pontoneers, directed by Éblé,' says Chambray, 'will lived as long as the memory of the passage of the Berezina. Though weakened by the ills they had suffered for so long, though lacking*

*proper food, and warming spirits, they could be seen, braving water sometimes up to their chests; it was a race towards almost certain death; but the army was watching; they sacrificed themselves for its regard.*

*‘Disorder reigned among the French,’ Monsieur de Ségur remarks in turn, ‘and materials were lacking for the two bridges; twice, on the nights of the 26th and 27th, that for vehicles was damaged, and the crossing was delayed for several hours: it broke for a third time on the 27th, towards four in the afternoon. On the other hand, the idlers scattered through the woods and surrounding villages had failed to take advantage on the first night, and on the 27th, when daylight returned, they all presented themselves at the same time to cross the bridges.*

*This was above all the moment when the Guard, on whom they modelled themselves, gave way. Its departure acted as a signal: they ran from all sides; they piled up on the river bank. In an instant one saw a dense mass of horses, carts and men, huge and confused, besieging the narrow entryway to the bridges which it overwhelmed. Those in front, urged on by those who followed, driven back by the Guards and the pontoneers, or halted by the presence of the river, were crushed, trodden underfoot, or precipitated onto the ice carried by the Berezina. From this vast, terrifying crowd rose, now a deafening buzz, now a mass clamor, a mixture of groans and dreadful imprecations....The disorder was so great, that, around two o’clock, when the Emperor presented himself in turn, he had to employ force to open a passage for himself. A corps of Grenadier Guards, and Latour-Maubourg, in pity, gave up trying to reach daylight over the heads of these unfortunate men...*

*The immense multitude, crammed willy-nilly onto the bank with the horses and carts, formed an appalling obstacle. Towards noon the first enemy cannonballs fell into the midst of this chaos: it acted as the signal for universal despair.*

*Many of those who were first squeezed out of this crowd of desperate men, failing to reach the bridge, chose to clamber along its sides; but most were driven back into the river. It was there that one saw women, amongst the chunks of ice, their children in their arms, raising them up as they sank; already submerged their rigid arms still held them aloft.*

*In the midst of this terrible confusion, the artillery bridge caved in and broke. The column committed to this narrow passage wished in vain to turn back. The wave of men following, ignorant of this disaster, not understanding the shouts of those in front, pushed past them, and drove them into the gulf, into which they were precipitated in their turn.*

*All then turned towards the other bridge. A multitude of large wagons, heavy carts and artillery pieces flowed in from every side. Urged on by their drivers, and quickly out of control on the unyielding and uneven slope, in the midst of this mass of men, they crushed the wretches taken by surprise between them; then crashing together, the majority overturned violently, stunning those around them in their fall. Then whole ranks of distraught men, pushed up against these obstacles, were obstructed, fell, and were crushed by masses of other unfortunates who followed them without cease.*

*These waves of pitiful creatures thus broke one upon another; nothing could be heard but screams of pain and rage. In that fearful confusion, crushed and stifled, men struggled beneath the feet of their comrades, clutching at them tooth and nail. The latter thrust them off pitilessly like enemies. Amidst the fearful noise of this furious hurricane, of cannon fire, the howling storm, the whistle of bullets, exploding shells,*

*shouts, groans, appalling oaths, this ragged crowd could no longer hear the cries of the victims it swallowed.'*

The other testimonies are in accord with Monsieur de Ségur's description: as evidence and in summary, I will only cite this passage from the *Mémoires* of Vaudoncourt:

*'The vast plain before Veselovo offers, this evening, a spectacle whose horror is difficult to convey. It is covered with wagons and carts, most of them overturned on one another and shattered. It is covered with the corpses of civilians, among whom can be seen all too many women and children drawn along in the wake of the army to Moscow, or fleeing that city to follow their compatriots, and whom death has taken in different ways. The fate of these wretches, caught in the confusion of two armies, was to be crushed by the cart-wheels or under the horses' feet; struck by bullets or by cannonballs from both sides; drowned in trying to cross the bridges with the troops, or stripped by the enemy soldiers and thrown naked into the snow, where the cold soon ended their sufferings.'*

What groans did Bonaparte utter at this same catastrophe, at this painful event, one of the most momentous in history; at this disaster which surpassed those of Cambyses' army? What cry was wrested from his soul? These four words in his bulletin: *'During the 26th and 27th the army crossed over.'* You have just seen how they did so! Napoleon was not even moved by the sight of those women lifting their infants above the waves in their arms. That other great man, who ruled over a world in the name of France, Charlemagne, a crude barbarian apparently, sang and wept (being also a poet) over a child swallowed by the Ebro while playing on the ice:

*'Trux puer adstricto glacie dum ludit in Hebro.'*

The Duke of Belluno was tasked with defending the crossing. He had left General Partouneaux behind him, who was forced to surrender. The Duke of Reggio, wounded afresh, was replaced in command by Marshal Ney. The marshes of Gaina were crossed: the least foresight on the part of the Russians would have rendered the paths impassable. At Malodeczno, on the 3rd of December, all the couriers were found who had been halted there for three weeks. It was there that Napoleon considered abandoning the flag, *'Can I remain,'* he said, *'at the head of a rout?'* At Smorgoni, the King of Naples and Prince Eugène urged him to return to France. The Duke of Istria brought their message; at his first words Napoleon grew infuriated; he shouted: *'Only my mortal enemy could propose that I quit the army in the position in which it finds itself.'* He made as if to hurl himself at the Marshal, his naked sword in his hand. That evening he recalled the Duke of Istria and said: *'Since you all wish it, it is best for me to leave.'* The scene was pre-arranged; the plan for his departure was already in hand, as it was being played out. Indeed Monsieur Fain assures us that the Emperor had decided to quit the army during the march which *took him on the 4th from Malodeczno to Biclitza*. Such was the comedy with which the great actor brought his tragic drama to a close.

At Smorgoni, the Emperor wrote his twenty-ninth Bulletin. On the 5th of December he climbed into a sledge with Monsieur de Caulaincourt: it was ten at night. He crossed Germany under the assumed name of the companion of his flight. With his disappearance, everything collapsed: in a sandstorm, when a granite colossus buries itself beneath the desert of the Thebaid, not a shadow remains on the sands. A few soldiers, of whom nothing but their heads seemed alive, ended by eating each other in huts made of pine branches. Misfortunes that seemed incapable of growing any worse reached fruition: winter, which till



then had merely been the autumn of those parts, descended. The Russians had no longer the heart to fire, in those icy wastes, at the frozen shadows that Bonaparte left wandering in his wake.

At Vilna they encountered only Jews who left the enemy to the sicknesses they had first incurred themselves in their avarice. A final defeat crushed the remaining French, on the hill of Ponary. At last they reached the Niemen: the three bridges over which our troops had filed, no longer existed; a single bridge, the work of the enemy, spanned the frozen waters. Of the five hundred thousand men, and countless guns, that in the month of June, had crossed the river, only a thousand regulars, a few cannon, and thirty thousand wretches covered with wounds were seen to re-cross it at Kowno. No more music, no more songs of victory; blue in the face, the throng, whose frozen eyelashes held their eyelids apart, marched in silence onto the bridge or crawled from floe to floe to the Polish shore. Arriving in huts heated by stoves, the poor wretches expired: their lives melting away with the snow in which they were enveloped. General Gourgaud states that a hundred and twenty-seven thousand men re-passed the Niemen: even accepting this number it would still represent a loss of three hundred and thirty thousand men during the four month campaign.

Murat, reaching Gumbinnen, called his officers together and said: *'It is no longer possible to serve a madman; there is no longer any merit in his cause; there is not a Prince of Europe who believes in his words or his treaties anymore.'* From there he went to Poznan, and on the 16th of January 1813, vanished. Twenty-three days later, the Prince of Schwarzenberg left the army: it passed under the command of Prince Eugène. General Yorck, ostensibly reprimanded by Frederick-William but quickly reconciled to him again, withdrew taking the Prussians with him: the European defection had begun.

## BOOK XXI

### CHAPTER 8

A verdict on the Russian Campaign – The last bulletin of the Grand Army –  
Bonaparte's return to Paris – The Senate Address

During the whole of that campaign Bonaparte was inferior to his generals, and particularly Marshal Ney. The excuses given for Bonaparte's flight are inadmissible: the proof is there, for his departure, which was supposed to save everything, saved nothing. His leaving, far from repairing the damage, added to it and hastened the dissolution of the Rhine Federation.

The twenty-ninth and last bulletin of the Grand Army, dated from Malodeczno on the 3rd of December 1812, which arrived in Paris on the 18th, only preceded Napoleon by two days: it astonished France, however far it may have been from the frank expression it has been praised for; striking contradictions were noted in it and failed to hide the truth which emerged throughout. At St Helena (as we have seen above), Bonaparte expressed himself more honestly: his revelations could no longer compromise a crown already fallen from his brow. Yet it is still essential to listen for a moment to the havoc-maker:

*'The army,' he says in the bulletin of the 3rd of December 1812, 'which was so splendid on the 6th, was quite altered by the 14th. Almost without cavalry, artillery, or transports, we could not detect our own troops a mile away...*

*In all these maneuvers, the Emperor always marched in the midst of his Guard, the cavalry being commanded by a Marshal, the Duke of Istria, and the infantry by the Duke of Dantzig. His Majesty was satisfied with the fine spirit shown by his Guard; it has always been prepared to take itself to wherever circumstances required; but the circumstances were always such that its mere presence sufficed, and in fact it did not have to be employed.*

*The Prince of Neuchâtel, the Marshal in Chief, the Master of Horse and all the aides-de-camp and army officers of the Emperor's household, always accompanied His Majesty.*

*Our cavalry was so lacking in mounts, that it was necessary to gather together the officers who still had a horse, in order to form four companies of five hundred men each. The generals carried out the function of captains, and colonels those of subalterns. This dedicated squadron, commanded by General Grouchy, and under the orders of the King of Naples, did not lose sight of the Emperor at any time. His Majesty's health has never been better.'*

What a tale of victories! Bonaparte had once asked the Directors: *'What have you done to those hundred thousand Frenchmen all my companions in glory? They are dead!'* France might now have asked Bonaparte: *'What have you done in a single blow to the five hundred thousand soldiers of the Niemen, all my children and allies? They are dead!'*

After the loss of those hundred thousand Republican soldiers whom Napoleon mourned, the country at least was saved: the final results of the Russian Campaign led to the invasion of France and the loss of all that our glorious sacrifices had accumulated in the previous twenty years.

Bonaparte had been constantly guarded by *a dedicated squadron which did not lose sight of him at any time*; compensation for the three hundred thousand lives lost: but why had *nature not tempered them as finely*? They should have retained their *wonted* ways. Could that living cannon-fodder merit *its movements* being as religiously looked after as those of His Majesty?

The bulletin concludes, as do several others, with those words: *'The health of His Majesty has never been better.'*

Families, dry your tears: Napoleon is feeling fine.

Following this account, can be read this official note in the journals: *'This is a historic narrative of the first order; Xenophon and Caesar wrote thus, the one in his Retreat of the Ten Thousand, the other in his Commentaries.'* What a ludicrous academic comparison! But, leaving aside the unpaid literary advertising, is one to take satisfaction in the fact that the appalling calamities Napoleon caused furnished the occasion to display his talents as a writer! Nero set fire to Rome, and sang of the burning of Troy. We have reached the barbarous contempt of a flattery that disinters Xenophon and Caesar from memory, in order to offend France's eternal sorrow.

The Senate (Conservateur) rushes forward: *'The Senate,'* says Lacépède, *'hastens to the foot of the throne of Your Royal and Imperial Majesty to do homage, in congratulation for the happy arrival of Your Majesty amongst his people. The Senate, the highest council of the Emperor, and whose authority exists only while the monarch requires it and renders it in effect, is established for the preservation of this monarchy and the heirs to your throne, of our fourth dynasty. France and posterity will find it, in all circumstances, loyal to that sacred duty, and all its members will be forever ready to die for the defence of this palladium of national safety and prosperity.'* The members of the Senate have since proven it marvelously by decreeing Napoleon's deposition!

The Emperor replies: *'Senators, what you have said is most agreeable to me. I have at heart the POWER AND GLORY of France; but our first thoughts are FOR ALL that might perpetuate internal peace...for THIS THRONE with which FROM NOW ON is linked the destiny of our country...I have asked Providence for a CERTAIN NUMBER of years...I have considered what has been achieved at different epochs; I will continue to think of this.'*

The natural historian of reptiles, by daring to congratulate Napoleon publicly on his good fortune, is however frightened of his own courage; he has a fear of *existing*; he needs to say that the authority of the Senate *only exists* while the monarch requires it and *renders it in effect*. So great is the fear of an independent Senate!

Bonaparte, on St Helena, making excuses for his conduct, says: *'Is it the Russians who destroyed me? No, it was false reports, foolish intrigues, treason, stupidity, plenty of things, in short, that will perhaps one day be known and which may palliate or justify the two great mistakes, in diplomacy and in war, which people have the right to charge me with.'*

Faults which only lead to the loss of a battle, or a province, allow excuses to be made in arcane words, whose explanation is left to the future; but faults which overthrow a society, and subject a nation's freedom to the yoke, are not erased by a humbling of pride.

After so many disasters and heroic events, it is terrible in the end to have no more to choose between on reading the Senate's words than horror or contempt.

**End of Book XXI**

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 1

The ills of France – Forced celebrations – A sojourn in my Valley – The Legitimacy awakes

When Bonaparte arrived, preceded by his bulletin, there was general consternation. *‘The Empire,’* says Monsieur Ségur, *‘could only count on men aged by time or war, and children! Almost all the mature men, where were they? Women’s tears, mothers’ cries, spoke clearly enough! Bowed laboriously over the land, which without them would have remained untilled, they cursed the war he personified.’*

Returning from the Berezina, there was no less of a requirement to dance: that is what one learns from the Souvenirs pour servir à l’histoire, of Queen Hortense. One was forced to go to the ball, death in one’s heart, weeping inwardly for relatives or friends. Such was the dishonour to which despotism had condemned France: one saw in the salons what one met with in the streets, creatures distracting themselves from their own lives by singing out their misery to divert the passers-by.

For three years I had been in retirement at Aulnay: from my pine-clad hill, in 1811, I had followed with my eyes the comet which during the night fled towards the wooded horizon; she was beautiful and melancholy, and, like a queen, drew her long train behind her. Whom did she seek, that lost stranger to our world? Towards whom did she make her way through the wastes of the sky?

On the 23rd of October 1812, sheltering for a moment in Paris, on the Rue des Saints-Pères, at the Hôtel Lavalette, Madame Lavalette, my hostess, being deaf and furnished with her long ear-trumpet, roused me: *‘Monsieur! Monsieur! Bonaparte is dead! General Malet has killed Hulin. All the powers that be are changed. The Revolution is over.’*

Bonaparte was so beloved that for a while Paris was in a state of joy, except for the authorities who were left in an absurd limbo. A rumor had almost toppled the Empire. Escaping from prison at midnight a soldier was master of the world at daybreak; a fantasy was close to carrying off a formidable reality. The most moderate said: *‘If Napoleon is not dead, he will return chastened by his mistakes and reverses; he will make peace with Europe, and our remaining children will be saved.’* Two hours after his wife had spoken to me, Monsieur Lavalette entered to inform me of Malet’s arrest: *it was no secret* (that was his habitual phrase) *that all was over*. Day and night occurred simultaneously. I have related how Bonaparte received the news in a snowy field near Smolensk. The Senatus Consulte (of 12th of January 1813) put at the disposal of the returning Napoleon two hundred and fifty thousand men; inexhaustible France saw flow, from its blood through its wounds, fresh soldiers. Then a long-forgotten voice was heard; a few aged French ears thought they recognized the sound: it was the voice of Louis XVIII; it rose from the depths of exile. Louis XVI’s brother proclaimed the principles to be established one day by constitutional charter; the first aspiration towards liberty that emanated from our former kings.

Alexander, having entered Warsaw, addressed a proclamation to Europe:

*‘If the North will imitate the sublime example set by the Castilians, the world’s period of mourning is over. Europe, on the verge of falling prey to a monster, will recover its freedom and tranquility. Let this blood-stained colossus who has menaced the continent with his endless criminality remain in the end merely a distant memory of horror and pity!’*

That *monster*, that *blood-stained colossus who menaced the continent with his endless criminality*, had learnt so little from misfortune that barely escaped from the Cossacks he flung himself upon an old man whom he still held prisoner.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 2

#### The Pope at Fontainebleau

We saw the Pope's abduction from Rome, his stay at Savona, then his detention at Fontainebleau. Discord held sway in the Sacred College: some Cardinals wished the Holy Father to resist for spiritual reasons, and they were ordered to only wear black garments; some were sent into exile in the provinces; some of the leading French clergy were imprisoned at Vincennes; other Cardinals assented to the Pope's total submission; they retained their red garments; it was a second visitation of the Candlemas candles.

While at Fontainebleau the Pope obtained some respite from the obsession with Red Cardinals, he walked alone in the galleries of Francis I; he recognized some remnants of arts which recalled the Holy City, and from his windows he could see the pine trees that Louis XVI had planted facing the gloomy apartments where Monaldeschi was assassinated. From this deserted place, like Jesus, he could take pity on the kingdoms of the earth. The septuagenarian, half-dead, Bonaparte himself visiting to torment him, mechanically signed that Concordat of 1813, which he protested against as soon as Cardinals Pacca and Consalvi arrived.

When Pacca rejoined the captive with whom he had left Rome, he thought to find a large crowd around the royal jail; he only found a few servants in the courtyards and a sentry on duty at the top of the Horseshoe Staircase. The windows and doors to the palace were closed: in the first antechamber to the apartments he found Cardinal Doria, in the other rooms stood several French bishops. Pacca was announced to His Holiness: he was standing motionless, pale, hunched, thin, his eyes sunken in his head.

The Cardinal told him that he had hurried his journey to throw himself at his feet. Then the Pope said: *'These Cardinals dragged us to the table and made us sign.'* Pacca withdrew to the apartment prepared for him, overcome by the solitariness of the residence, the expressionless eyes, the despondent faces, and the profound sorrow imprinted on the Pope's visage. Returning to His Holiness, he *'found him'* (he himself speaks) *'in a state worthy of compassion and in fear of his life. He was overwhelmed by an inconsolable sadness when speaking of what had taken place; that tormenting thought stopped him sleeping and prevented him taking the nourishment which sufficed to keep him from death: - "As to that", he said, "I shall die mad like Clement XIV."*

In the silence of those empty galleries, where the voices of Saint Louis, Francis I, Henry IV, and Louis XIV were no longer heard, the Holy Father, spent several days composing and copying the letter which was to be sent to the Emperor. Cardinal Pacca carried the document about hidden in his robes, at some risk since the Pope had added a few lines to it in his own handwriting. The work done, the Pope gave it, on the 24th of May 1813, to Colonel Lagorce and asked him to take it to the Emperor. At the same time he read a short speech to the various Cardinals who were present: he considered the brief he had issued at Savona and the Concordat of 25th January as null and void. *'May the Lord be blessed,'* the speech read, *'who has not removed his mercy from us! He has simply wished to humble us through salutary confession. Let us then be humbled for the good of our soul; to Him, through all the centuries, exaltation, honor and glory!'*

*From the Palace of Fontainebleau, the 24th of March 1813.'*

No finer decree has ever issued from that Palace. The Pope's conscience was eased, the martyr's expression became serene; his smile and his lips regained their charm, and his eyes closed in sleep.

At first Napoleon threatened to *make the heads of some of those priests at Fontainebleau leap from their shoulders*; he considered declaring himself head of State religion; then, regaining his temper, he pretended to know nothing of the Pope's letter, But his fortunes were in decline. The Pope, from an order of poor monks, dragged by misfortune among the crowd, seemed to have taken on the great mantle of Tribune of the People once more, and given the signal for the deposition of the oppressor of public freedom.



## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 3

#### Defections – The deaths of Lagrange and Delille

Ill fortune brings betrayal with it but does not justify it; in March of 1813, Prussia allies itself with Russia at Kalisz. On the 3rd of March, Sweden signs a treaty with the Court of St James; she is obliged to provide thirty thousand men, Hamburg is evacuated by the French, Berlin entered by Cossacks, Dresden occupied by the Russians and Prussians.

The defection of the Confederation of the Rhine is imminent. Austria adheres to its alliance with Russia and Prussia. The war in Italy re-commences and Prince Eugène is sent there.

In Spain, the English army defeats Joseph at Vittoria; the paintings stripped from the churches and palaces fall into the Ebro; I have seen them in Madrid and at the Escorial; I had seen them when they were restored in Paris: the waves and Napoleon had passed over these Murillos and Raphaels, *velut umbra* (like a shadow). Wellington, ever advancing, defeats Soult at Roncesvalles: our noblest memories formed the background to the scene of our later fate.

On the 14th of February, at the opening of the Legislature, Bonaparte had declared that he had always wanted peace and that it was essential for the world. This lie no longer emanated from him. Moreover there was little sympathy for the grief of France from the lips of one who called us *his subjects*: Bonaparte exacted suffering from us, as a tribute due to him.

On the 3rd of April, the Senate (Conservateur) added a hundred and eighty thousand combatants to those it had already allocated: an extraordinary levy of men in the midst of the regular levies. On the 10th of April, Lagrange was taken; the Abbé Delille died some days later. If nobility of feeling outweighs depth of thought in Heaven, the singer of *La Pitié* is nearer the throne of God than the author of the *Theory of Analytic Functions*. Bonaparte left Paris on the 15th of April.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 4

#### The Battles of Lützen, Bautzen and Dresden – Reverses in Spain

The levies of 1812, following one another, have halted in Saxony. Napoleon arrives. The honors of the former lost host are handed to two hundred thousand conscripts who fight like the grenadiers of Marengo. On the 2nd of May, the battle of Lützen is won: Bonaparte, in these fresh battles, scarcely used artillery any longer. Entering Dresden, he tells the inhabitants: *'I am not unaware of the joy in which you indulged when the Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia entered your walls. We can still see on the cobblestones the remains of the flowers that your young girls scattered in the path of those monarchs.'* Did Napoleon remember the young girls of Verdun? It was in the days of his youth.

At Bautzen, another triumph, but one after which the Commander of the Engineers, Kirgener, and Duroc, the Grand Marshal of the Palace, were buried. *'There is a future life,'* the Emperor told Duroc, *'we will meet again.'* Did Duroc care much about that meeting?

On the 26th and 27th of August, they reached the Elbe, on fields already famous. Returned from America, having seen Bernadotte in Stockholm, and Alexander in Prague, Moreau had both legs carried away by a cannonball, at Dresden, at the side of the Russian Emperor: a familiar outcome of Napoleonic destiny. They learned, in the French camp, of the death of the victor of Hohenlinden, by means of a stray dog, on whose collar was inscribed the name of the new Turenne; the animal, living on without its master, ran here and there among the dead: *Te, janitor Orci* (You, oh guardian of the Underworld)!

The Prince of Sweden, who had become the Generalissimo of the Army of North Germany, had addressed a proclamation to his soldiers on the 15th of August:

*'Soldiers, the same feelings that guided the French in 1792, and which led them to unite, and combat the armies entering their territory, must now direct your valor against one who, having invaded the soil which bore you, still enslaves your brothers, your wives and your children.'*

Bonaparte, incurring universal disapproval, set himself against liberty which attacked him on all sides, in all its forms. A Senatus-Consulte of the 28th of August annulled the judgement of a jury at Anvers: a very minor infraction, doubtless, of the rights of citizens, after the arbitrary enormities employed by the Emperor; but at the heart of the law is a sacred freedom whose cry must be heard: that oppression practiced against a jury made more noise than the many other oppressions to which France fell victim.

Finally, in the south, the enemy trod our soil; the English, Bonaparte's obsession and the source of almost all his mistakes, crossed the Bidasoa on the 7th of October: Wellington, the man of destiny, was the first to set his foot on the soil of France.

Insisting on remaining in Saxony, despite Vandamme's capture in Bohemia and Ney's defeat near Berlin by Bernadotte, Napoleon returned to Dresden. Then the Landsturm was levied; a patriotic war, similar to that which had freed Spain, was being organized.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 5

#### The Campaign in Saxony, or the Campaign of The Poets

The battles of 1813 have been referred to as the Campaign in Saxony: they would be better named the *Campaign of Young Germany* or the *Campaign of the Poets*. To what despair had Bonaparte not reduced us by his oppression, that while watching our own blood flow, we could yet deny a gesture of support for generous youth taking up the sword in the name of freedom? Each of those battles was a protest on behalf of national rights.

In one of his proclamations, dated from Kalisz on the 25th of March 1813, Alexander called the people of Germany to arms, promising them, in the name of his royal 'brothers', free institutions. This was the signal for open activity by the Burschenschaft, which had already been formed in secret. The German universities re-opened; they set aside sorrow in order to think only of reparation for their injuries: '*Let mourning and tears be brief, grief and distress long-lasting.*' said the ancient Germans, '*it is right for women to weep, for men to remember: Lamenta ac lacrymas cito, dolorem et tristitiam tarde ponunt. Feminis lugere honestum est, viris meminisse.*' Then the young Germans hastened to free their country; then they were in a hurry, those Germans, *allies of the Empire*, whom ancient Rome aided, in supplying them with armor and spears, *velut tela atque arma*.

In Berlin, in 1813, Professor Fichte gave a lecture on *duty*; he spoke of the disasters which afflicted Germany, and finished his lecture with these words: '*This course will be suspended until the end of the Campaign. We will continue it when our country is free, or we will die regaining our freedom.*' His young audience rise to their feet in acclamation: Fichte descends from his seat, passes through the crowd, and goes to enroll in a corps leaving for the army.

All Bonaparte has scorned and insulted becomes a danger to him: intellect enters the lists against brute force; Moscow is the flame by whose light Germany dons its harness: '*To arms!*' the Muse cries. '*The Phoenix of Russia has soared from its pyre!*' That Queen of Prussia, so defenseless and so beautiful, whom Napoleon showered his clever insults upon, is transformed into an implored and imploring shade: '*How softly she sleeps!*' sing the bards, '*Ah, may you sleep until that day when your people wash away the rust of their swords with blood! Wake, then! Wake! Be our angel of liberty and vengeance!*'

Körner had only one fear, that of dying in prose: '*Poesy! Poesy!*' he exclaimed, '*bring me death at the break of day!*'

He composed, in camp, the hymn of The Lyre and the Sword.

THE KNIGHT: '*Tell me fine sword, sword at my side, why the light of your glance is so ardent today? You glance at me with the gaze of love, fine sword, sword that is my joy. Huzza!*'

THE SWORD: '*It's because a brave knight bears me along: that is what inflames my glance; for I am the strength of a free man. Huzza!*'

THE KNIGHT: '*Yes, my blade, yes, I am a free man, and I love you from the depths of my heart: I love you as if you were my betrothed; I love you like a dear mistress.*'

THE SWORD: *'And I, I give myself to you! To you my life, to you my soul of steel! Oh! If we are betrothed, when will you say: Come to me, come my dear mistress?'*

Might one not believe one is listening to one of those Northern warriors, one of those men of battle and solitude, of whom Saxo Grammaticus wrote: *'He fell, smiling: and died.'*

It is not the cool enthusiasm of a Skald certainly: Körner had his sword by his side; handsome, fair, young, an Apollo on horseback, he sang of the darkness like an Arab in the saddle; his *maoual* (*chant*), while charging the enemy, was accompanied by the sound of his galloping mount. Wounded at Lützen, he dragged himself into the woods, where some peasants found him; he emerged to die on the plains of Mecklenburg, at the age of twenty-one: he fled the arms of a woman he loved, and forsook all the delights of life. *'Women take pleasure,'* said Tyrtaeus, *'in contemplating the radiant and upright man: he is no less handsome if he falls in the front ranks.'*

The new followers of Arminius, raised in the school of Greece, had a common national anthem: when these students abandoned the peaceful avenues of science for the field of battle, the silent joys of study for the noisy perils of war, Homer and the Nibelungenlied for the sword, with what did they counter our hymn of blood, our Revolutionary canticle? These stanzas full of religious feeling, and human sincerity:

*'Where is Germany? Name that great land to me! Wherever the German language sounds, and our German song is heard praising God: there is Germany.'*

*Germany is the land where a shake of the hand suffices as a pledge, where simple honesty shines in every glance, where affection glows in every heart.*

*O God, in Heaven, cast your eyes on us: grant us that purity of spirit, truly German, so that we may be loyal and true. There, is a German's country, all that land is his land.'*

These college friends, now companions in arms, do not join clubs where Septembrists vow to murder with the knife: loyal to their poetic imaginings, to historical tradition, to the cult of the past, they make an old castle, an ancient forest, a defensive sanctuary of the *Burschenschaft*. The *Queen of Prussia* becomes their patroness, instead of the *Queen of Night*.

At the summit of a hill, among the ruins, the soldier-scholars, with their officer-professors, see revealed the pinnacle of their beloved university halls: moved by memories of their learned past, and by this sight of the sanctuary of their studies and the games of their youth, they swear to free their country, as Melchthal, Fürst and Stauffacher had pronounced their triple oath in sight of the Alps, immortalized by them, and depicted by them. The German spirit has something mystical about it; Schiller's *Thekla* for example is a Teutonic daughter gifted with second-sight and imbued with a divine element. The Germans today worship liberty with an indefinable mysticism, just as they once designated the secret depths of the forests as *God: Deorumque nominibus appellant secretum illud...* The man whose life was a dithyramb of action only fell when the poets of Young Germany had sung, and taken up the sword, against their rival Napoleon, the armed poet.

Alexander was worthy of being the herald sent to the young Germans: he shared their elevated feelings, and he was in a position of power which made their plans achievable; but he let himself be made fearful by the fears of the monarchs who surrounded him. Those monarchs had never kept their promises; they

gave their people nothing in the way of benevolent political institutions. The children of the Muse (the flame by whom the inert mass of soldiers had been animated) were thrust into dungeons in recompense for their devotion and their noble beliefs. Alas, the generation that brought the Teutons freedom had vanished; there were only old worn out political incumbents in Germany. They praised Napoleon as a great man at every opportunity, so that their present admiration might excuse their past abasement. In that foolish enthusiasm for the man which made governments continue to grovel when they been whipped, they barely remembered Körner: '*Arminius, Germany's liberator,*' says Tacitus, '*was unknown to the Greeks who only admired themselves, and little celebrated among the Romans whom he had vanquished; but the barbarous nations still sing of him, caniturque barbaras apud gentes.*'

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 6

#### The Battle of Leipzig – Bonaparte's return to Paris – the Treaty of Valençay

On the 18th and 19th of October 1813 the battle took place on the fields of Leipzig that the Germans call the *Battle of the Nations*. Towards the end of the second day, the Saxons and the Wurtenbergers, deserting Napoleon's camp beneath the banner of Bernadotte, decided the outcome of the action: victory was tarnished by betrayal. The Prince of Sweden, the Emperor of Russia, and the King of Prussia entered Leipzig through three different gates. Napoleon, having experienced a crushing defeat, retreated. Since he knew nothing of sergeant's retreats, as he once said, he blew the bridges behind him. Prince Poniatowski, twice wounded, was drowned in the Weisse Elster: Poland fell with its last defender.

Napoleon did not halt till Erfurt: from there his bulletin announced that his army, ever victorious, *had met with a great battle*: Erfurt, not long before, had seen Napoleon at the height of his prosperity.

Finally, the Bavarians, following the other deserters from ill fortune, tried to annihilate the rest of our soldiers at Hanau. Wrède was defeated by the Guards of Honor alone: a few conscripts, already veterans, treated him ruthlessly; they saved Bonaparte and took up position behind the Rhine. Arriving in Mainz as a fugitive, Napoleon, returned to Saint-Cloud on the 9th of November; the indefatigable De Lacépède arrived to tell him: '*Your Majesty has overcome all.*' Monsieur de Lacépède spoke appropriately concerning oviparous creatures; but could not keep on his feet.

Holland regained its freedom, and recalled the Prince of Orange. On the 1st of December the Allied Powers declared: '*that they were not making war against France, only against the Emperor, or rather against that domination he had exercised for too long, beyond the borders of his Empire, to the detriment of Europe and France.*'

As the moment approached when we would be shut in our former territory once more we asked what purpose the upheaval in Europe, and the massacre of so many millions of men, had served? Time swallows us and continues tranquilly on its course.

By the Treaty of Valençay of the 11th of December, the wretched Ferdinand VII was returned to Madrid: thus ended, obscurely and in haste, that criminal enterprise in Spain, the primary cause of Napoleon's fall. One can always go to the bad, one can always kill people, including a king; but the way back is difficult: Jacques Clément repaired his sandals for the journey to Saint-Cloud, his colleagues, smiling, questioned how long his handiwork would last: '*Long enough for the road I travel,*' he replied, '*I am obliged to go, not to return.*'

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 7

The Legislature convened – Then adjourned – The Allies cross the Rhine – Bonaparte's anger – New Year's Day 1814

The Legislature assembled on the 19th of December 1813. Astounding on the field of battle, remarkable in his councils of State, Bonaparte was less effective in politics: the language of liberty he knew nothing of; if he wished to express congenial feelings, or paternal sentiments, he was moved in an inappropriate way, and masked a lack of feeling with tender words. *'My heart,'* he told the Legislature, *'needs the presence and affection of my subjects. I have never been seduced by prosperity; adversity will find me immune to its sufferings. I have conceived and executed great schemes for the prosperity and good of the world. Monarch and father, I feel that peace enhances the security of thrones and that of families.'*

An official Moniteur article said, in July 1804, that *under the Empire, France would never extend beyond the Rhine, and its armies would no longer cross it.*

The allies crossed that river on the 21st of December 1813, from Basle to Schaffhausen, with more than a hundred thousand men; on the 31st of the same month, the Army of Silesia commanded by Blücher, crossed in turn, from Mannheim to Coblentz.

By order of the Emperor, the Senate and the Legislature appointed two commissions charged with examining documents related to negotiation with the Coalition powers; foresight on the part of a power which, denying consequences which had become inevitable, wished to transfer the responsibility to another authority.

The Legislative commission, presided over by Monsieur Lainé, dared to state *'that steps towards peace would be assured of their effect if the French were convinced that their blood would only be shed in order to defend the country and laws which protect them; that His Majesty must be implored to maintain the whole and constant execution of the laws which guarantee to the French the rights of liberty, security, and property, and to the nation the free exercise of its political rights.'*

The Minister of Police, the Duke of Rovigo, has all traces of their report removed; a decree of the 31st December adjourns the Legislature; the doors of the room are locked. Bonaparte considered the members of the Legislative commission as *agents in the pay of England*: *'The said Lainé, 'he remarked, 'is a traitor who corresponds with the Prince Regent through the intermediary De Sèze; Raynouard, Maine de Biran, and Flaugergues are dissidents.'*

The soldier was astonished not to be encountering those Poles he had abandoned, who, drowning themselves in order to obey his orders, still shouted: *'Long Live the Emperor!'* He called the report of the commission a motion passed by a Jacobin club. There is not a speech of Bonaparte's in which his aversion for the Republic which spawned him does not emerge; though he detested its crimes less than its freedoms. Regarding this same report, he added: *'Do they want to re-establish the sovereignty of the people? Well, in that case, I constitute the people; since I intend always to be wherever sovereignty resides.'* No despot has ever revealed his character more clearly: it is Louis XIV's phrase re-visited: *'The State: that is I.'*

At the reception on New Year's Day 1814, a scene was anticipated. I knew someone attached to the Court, who proposed to take his sword along in his hand, just in case. Nevertheless Napoleon went no further than violent words, though he uttered them in a quantity that even caused some embarrassment to his halberdiers: 'Why,' he shouted, *'talk about these domestic matters in front of all Europe? Dirty linen should be washed in private. What is a throne? A piece of wood covered with a piece of cloth: all depends on who is seated there. France has more need of me than I of her. I am one of those men one can kill, but not dishonour. We will have peace in three months, or the enemy will be driven from our territory, or I will be dead.'*

Bonaparte was accustomed to wash French linen in blood. In three months there was no peace, the enemy was not driven from our territory, and Bonaparte had not lost his life: death was not yet his fate. Overwhelmed by so many problems and the obstinate ingratitude of the master she had bestowed on herself, France saw herself invaded with the motionless stupor born of despair.

An Imperial decree mobilized one hundred and twenty-one battalions of the National Guard; another decree created a Regency Cabinet, presided over by Cambacérès and composed of Ministers, at whose head the Empress was installed. Joseph, an available monarch, back from Spain with his spoils, was made Commandant General of Paris. On the 25th of January 1814, Bonaparte left his palace for the army, off to light a brilliant flame as he faded away.



## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 8

#### The Pope set at liberty

A few days before, the Pope had regained his freedom; the hand that went to him bearing chains was forced to break those irons he had bestowed: Providence had altered their fates, and the wind which blew in Napoleon's face drove the allies towards Paris.

Pius VII, informed of his deliverance, hastened to make a brief prayer in the chapel of Francis I; he climbed into a carriage and traversed that forest in which, according to popular tradition, the great hunter Death could be seen when a king was about to visit Saint Denis.

The Pope travelled under the surveillance of an officer of the gendarmerie who followed him in a second carriage. At Orléans, he learnt the name of the town he was entering.

He followed the Southern route to the acclamations of the people of those provinces which Napoleon would soon pass through, scarcely feeling safe despite the guardianship of foreign officers. His Holiness was delayed in his journey by his oppressor's very fall: the authorities had ceased to function; no one was obeyed; an order penned by Bonaparte, an order which twenty-four hours earlier would have bowed the noblest head and made a kingdom topple, was worthless paper: Napoleon lacked those remaining moments of power in which to protect the captive his power had persecuted. A provisional mandate of the Bourbons was needed to ensure that Pontiff was set free who had placed their crown on an alien head: what a confusion of destinies!

Pius VII travelled among hymns and tears, to the sound of bells, to cries of: *'Long live the Pope! Long live the Head of the Church!'* They brought him, not the keys of towns, capitulations drenched with blood and obtained by murder, rather they brought to the sides of his carriage the sick for him to heal, and newly married couples for him to bless; he said to the former: *'May God console you!'* He extended his peace-giving hands over the latter; he touched little children in their mother's arms. Only those unable to walk remained in the towns. The pilgrims spent the night in the fields to await the arrival of an old freed priest. The peasants, in their simplicity, thought that the Holy Father resembled Our Lord; Protestants, moved, said: *'There is the greatest man of his century.'* Such is the grandeur of a truly Christian society, where God ceaselessly mingles with men; such is the superiority over the power of the sword and the scepter of the power of humility, sustained by religion and misfortune.

Pius VII passed through Carcassonne, Béziers, Montpellier and Nîmes, to reach Italy once more. On the banks of the Rhine, it seemed as if the innumerable crusaders of Raymond of Toulouse were still passing in revue at Saint-Rémy. The Pope saw Nice again, Savona, Imola, witness of his fresh afflictions and the first mortifications of his life: one likes to weep where one has wept. In commonplace moments one remembers places or times of happiness. Pius VII travelled again his virtuous hours and his sufferings, as a man in memory reviews his faded passions.

At Bologna, the Pope was left in the hands of the Austrian authorities. Murat, Joachim-Napoléon, King of Naples, wrote to him on the 4th of April 1814:

*‘Most Holy Father, the fortunes of war having rendered me master of the States which you possessed when you were forced to leave Rome, I do not hesitate to return them to your authority, renouncing all my rights of conquest over these lands, in your favor.’*

What remained to Joachim and Napoleon at their deaths?

The Pope no sooner arrived in Rome than he offered refuge to Napoleon’s mother. The legates had retaken possession of the Eternal City. On the 23rd of May, in the fullness of spring, Pius VII saw the dome of Saint-Peter’s. He has told of shedding tears on seeing the sacred dome again. Preparing to enter the Porta del Popolo, the Pontiff halted: twenty-two orphans dressed in white robes, and forty-five young girls carrying large gilded palm-leaves came forward singing hymns. The crowd shouted: ‘*Hosanna!*’ Pignatelli who had commanded the troops on the Quirinal when Radet took Pius VII’s Garden of Olives by assault, now led the procession of palms. At the same time that Pignatelli was changing roles, various noble perjurers, in Paris, were once more taking up their functions as grand-domestics, behind Louis XVIII’s armchair: prosperity was handed to us with slavery, as in former times a seigniorial estate was sold with its serfs.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 9

Notes which became the pamphlet: *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons* – I take an apartment on the Rue de Rivoli – The notable Campaign of 1814 in France

In the second book of these *Memoirs*, it states (I was then returning from my first exile in Dieppe): *'I was allowed to return to my Vallée...The earth trembles under the feet of foreign soldiers....I write like one of the last Romans, amidst the sounds of the Barbarian invasion. By day I trace pages as troubled as the events of the day....at night, while the rumble of distant cannon dies away among my woods, I return to the silence of years that sleep in the tomb, to the tranquility of my earliest memories.'*

These restless pages that I trace today were notes respecting the events of the time, which, collected, became my pamphlet: *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*. I had such an elevated idea of Napoleon's genius and the bravery of our soldiers, that foreign invasion, happy as it might be in its final outcome, would never have entered my head: but I thought that invasion, in making France realize the danger into which Napoleon's ambition had led her, would lead to an internal reaction, and that the freedom of the French would be achieved by their own efforts. It was with this idea in mind that I wrote my notes, in order that if our political assemblies halted the march of the Allies, and resolved to divorce themselves from the great man, who had become a scourge, they would know whom to resort to; it seemed to me that recourse was to be found in that authority, modified to suit the times, under which our ancestors had lived for eight centuries: when in a storm one finds only an old building within reach, ruined as it is, one shelters there.

In the winter of 1813-1814, I took an apartment on the Rue de Rivoli, facing the front railings of the Tuileries Garden, before which I had heard the death of the Duc d'Enghien being cried aloud. As yet in that street one could only see the arcades built by the Government and a few isolated houses, rising up here and there, their jagged sides outlines of waiting stone.

It required nothing less than the ills that weighed on France, to maintain the aversion that Napoleon inspired and at the same time resist the admiration that he could arouse as soon as he stirred: he was the most incredible genius in action who ever existed; his first Campaign in Italy and his last Campaign in France (I do not speak of Waterloo) were his two finest campaigns; Condé in the first, Turenne in the second, a great warrior in the former, a great man in the latter; though they differed in their outcomes: since with the one he gained an Empire, with the other he lost it. His last moments of power, naked and rootless as they were, could not have been extracted from him, like the teeth of a lion, except by the exertion of all Europe. Napoleon's name was still so formidable that the enemy armies only crossed the Rhine with apprehension; they looked behind them constantly to make sure that retreat was still possible; masters of Paris they still trembled. Alexander glancing back at Russia, on entering France, congratulated those who could return there, and wrote to his mother to express his anxiety and regret.

Napoleon beat the Russians at Saint-Dizier, the Prussians and the Russians at Brienne, as if to honor the fields in which he had been nurtured. He overthrew the Silesian army at Montmirail, at Champaubert and a section of the Grand Army at Montereau. He resisted everywhere; passing and re-passing in his own steps; pushing back the columns that surrounded him. The Allies proposed an armistice; Bonaparte tore up the peace preliminaries offered and shouted: *'I am nearer to Vienna than the Austrian Emperor is to Paris!'*

Russia, Austria, Prussia and England, for mutual support, concluded a fresh treaty of alliance at Chaumont; but at heart, alarmed by Bonaparte's resistance, they thought of retreat. At Lyons, an army presented itself on the Austrian flank; in the south, Marshal Soult halted the English; the Congress of Châtillon, which was not dissolved till the 15th of March, was still in negotiations. Bonaparte drove Blücher from the heights of Craonne. The Allied Grand Army only triumphed at Bar-sur-Aube, on the 27th of February, by weight of numbers. Bonaparte, increasing his forces, had recovered Troyes which had been re-occupied by the Allies. From Craonne he took himself to Rheims. '*Tonight,*' he said, '*I am off to catch my father-in-law at Troyes.*'

On the 20th of March, an engagement took place near Arcis-sur-Aube. During an artillery barrage, on a shell falling in front of a Guards' square the square appeared to make a slight movement. Bonaparte dashed up to the projectile whose fuse was smoking and made his horse sniff at it; the shell exploded, while the Emperor emerged safe and sound from the midst of the shattered lightning-bolt.

The battle was due to recommence the following day; but Bonaparte, yielding to the inspiration of genius, an inspiration nonetheless fatal to him, withdrew in order to bear down on the rear of the allied troops, separate them from their supplies, and swell his army with the garrisons from the frontier forts. The invaders were preparing to fall back towards the Rhine, when Alexander, by one of those heaven-sent impulses which change the world, decided to march on Paris, to which the road was now open (I have heard General Pozzo recount that it was he who persuaded the Emperor to advance). Napoleon thought he was drawing the bulk of the enemy after him, but he was only followed by ten thousand cavalry, whom he took to be the vanguard of the main body, and who were masking the true movement of the Prussians and Muscovites. He scattered those ten thousand horsemen at Saint-Dizier and Vitry, and then realized that the Allied Grand Army was not behind them; that army, hastening towards the capital, had only Marshals Marmont and Mortier facing it, with about twelve thousand conscripts.

Napoleon headed in haste for Fontainebleau: where the sacred prisoner, in departing, had left it to those who would repay and avenge. Two things are always linked together throughout history: when a man opens the way to injustice, at that same moment he opens a way to perdition, into which, after a certain distance, the former path will collapse.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 10

I begin printing my pamphlet – A note from Madame de Chateaubriand

Minds were greatly agitated: the hope of seeing the end, cost what it might, of the cruel war which had weighed on a France sated for twenty years with glory and misfortune overcame national pride among the masses. All were concerned with the part they would have to play in the imminent catastrophe. Every evening my friends came to Madame de Chateaubriand's to talk, to recount and comment on the day's events. Messieurs de Fontanes, de Clausel, and Joubert, came with a crowd of those transient friends whom events bring and events take away. Madame la Duchesse de Lévis, beautiful, tranquil and devoted, whom we will meet again in Ghent, kept Madame de Chateaubriand faithful company. Madame la Duchesse de Duras was also in Paris, and I often went to see Madame la Marquise de Montcalm, the Duc de Richelieu's sister.

I continued to be persuaded, despite the approach of fighting, that the Allies would not enter Paris, and that a national uprising would put an end to our fears. My obsession with that idea prevented me reacting to the presence of the foreign armies as keenly as I might have done: but I could not help reflecting on the calamities which we had inflicted on Europe, seeing Europe bringing them upon us in turn.

I did not stop working at my pamphlet; I was preparing it like a remedy for the time when anarchy would burst upon us. We no longer write like that today, at our ease, and with nothing to fear but newspaper skirmishes: at night I locked myself in; I put my papers under my pillow, a pair of loaded pistols on my table: I slept between those two Muses. My text was a double one; I had composed it in the form, which it retained, of a pamphlet, and also as a speech, differing in some respects from the pamphlet; I assumed that when France met, it would gather at the Hôtel de Ville, and I was doubly prepared.

Madame de Chateaubriand took notes at various times in our life together; among these notes, I find the following paragraph:

*'Monsieur de Chateaubriand wrote his pamphlet De Bonaparte et des Bourbons. If this pamphlet had been seized, punishment was not in doubt: the sentence would have been the scaffold. Yet the author betrayed unbelievable negligence in hiding it. Often, when he went out, he left it forgotten on the table; his prudence never went beyond placing it under his pillow, which he did in front of his manservant, a very honest lad, but one who might have succumbed to temptation. As for me, I was in mortal fear: as soon as Monsieur de Chateaubriand went out, I went to get the manuscript and hid it about me. One day, crossing the Tuileries, I realized I no longer had it, and, sure it was there when I went out, I was certain I had lost it en route. I saw the fatal writing already in the hands of the police, and Monsieur de Chateaubriand arrested: I fell down, unconscious, in the middle of the gardens; some kind gentlemen came to my assistance, and took me back to the house which was not far away. What torment as I climbed the stairs, torn between fear, which was almost certainty, and a faint hope of having forgotten to pick up the pamphlet! Nearing my husband's room, I felt a new faintness: I entered finally, nothing on the table: I went towards the bed; I first felt the pillow: I could feel nothing; I lifted it: I saw the scroll of paper! My heart quivers every time I think of it. I have never in my life experienced such a joyous moment. Certainly, I can truthfully say, it could have been no greater if I had found myself saved at the foot of the scaffold: since it was in fact someone dearer to me than me who had been saved.'*

How unhappy I would have been if I had realized I was capable of causing Madame de Chateaubriand a moment of pain!

However I had been obliged to entrust a printer with my secret; he had agreed to take the risk; according to the news of the hour, he returned or came to collect the half-composed proofs, as the sound of cannon fire approached or receded from Paris: for almost a fortnight I played heads or tails like this with my life.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 11

War at the gates of Paris – The appearance of Paris – Battle at Belleville – The Flight of Marie-Louise and the Regency – Monsieur de Talleyrand remains in Paris

The circle was tightening round the capital: every instant we learnt of the enemy's progress. Russian prisoners and wounded Frenchmen were carried pell-mell through the gates in carts; some, half-dead, fell beneath the wheels which they stained with blood. Conscripts, called-up from the interior, crossed the capital in long files, to join the army. At night, you could hear artillery trains passing along the outer boulevards, and no one knew if the distant explosions proclaimed decisive victory or final defeat.

The war finally reached the gates of Paris. From the towers of Notre-Dame you could see the heads of the Russian columns appearing, like the first undulations of a tidal-wave on the beach. I felt as a Roman must have felt, on the summit of the Capitol, with Alaric's soldiers and the ancient city of the Latins at his feet, just as I had Russian soldiers at my feet and the ancient city of the Gauls. Farewell then, paternal Lares, hearths which preserved national traditions, roofs beneath which breathed both Virginia sacrificed by her father to modesty and freedom, and that Héloïse consecrated by love to letters and religion.

For centuries Paris had not seen the smoke of enemy camp-fires, and it was Bonaparte, passing from triumph to triumph, who had given the Thebans sight of the women of Sparta. Paris was the marker from which he left to roam the earth: he returned leaving behind him the vast conflagration of his vain conquests.

People rushed to the Jardin des Plantes which the fortified abbey of Saint-Victor might once have been able to protect: the little world of swans and plantain-trees, to which our power had promised eternal peace, was troubled. From the summit of the maze, above the great cedar, over the granaries which Bonaparte had not had time to complete, beyond the site of the Bastille and the keep of Vincennes (places which tell of our historical development), the crowd could see the infantry-fire of the fight at Belleville. Montmartre was taken; cannonballs fell as far as the Boulevard du Temple. A few companies of the National Guard made a sortie and lost three hundred men in the fields around the '*tomb of the martyrs*'. Never did military France shine more brightly in the midst of her reverses: the ultimate heroes were the hundred and fifty young men of the École Polytechnique, transformed into artillery-men in the redoubts of the Chemin de Vincennes. Surrounded by the enemy, they refused to surrender; they had to be dragged from their guns: the Russian Grenadier seized them blackened with powder and covered with wounds; while they struggled in his arms, he lifted those young French palm branches in the air with cries of triumph and admiration, and restored them blood-stained to their mothers.

At that time Cambacérès had fled with Marie-Louise, the King of Rome and the Regency. On the walls you could read the following proclamation:

*King Joseph, Lieutenant-General of the Emperor  
Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard.*

*'Citizens of Paris,*

*The Regency Council has provided for the safety of the Empress and the King of Rome: I remain here with you. Let us arm ourselves to defend our city, its monuments, its riches, our women, our children, and all that is dear to us. Let this vast city become a fortified camp for a while, and let the enemy find shame beneath her walls which he hopes to enter in triumph.'*

Rostopchin had not tried to defend Moscow; he set fire to it. Joseph announced that he would never abandon the Parisians, and decamped quietly, leaving us his brave words posted on the street corners.

Monsieur de Talleyrand was nominated as a member of the Regency by Napoleon. From the moment that the Bishop of Autun ceased to be Minister for Foreign Affairs, under the Empire, he only dreamt of one thing, Bonaparte's disappearance, followed by the Regency of Marie-Louise; a Regency of which he, the Prince of Benevento, would be the head. Bonaparte, in naming him a member of the provisional Regency in 1814, seemed to have favored his secret wishes. Napoleon's death had not yet happened; it remained only for Monsieur de Talleyrand to hobble at the feet of the colossus he could not overthrow, and take advantage of the moment in his own interests: his savoir-faire was the genius of that man of bargains and compromise. The situation was difficult: to remain in the capital was what was indicated; but if Bonaparte returned, the Prince separated from the fugitive Regency, the tardy Prince, ran the risk of being shot; on the other hand, how could he abandon Paris at the moment when the Allies might enter? Would that not be to renounce the benefits of success, betray that dawn of events, for which Monsieur de Talleyrand had been created? Far from siding with the Bourbons, he feared them because of their sundry apostasies. However, since they stood a chance of power, Monsieur de Vitrolles, with the consent of the married priest, went furtively to the Congress of Châtillon, as the unacknowledged go-between with the Legitimacy. That precaution taken, the Prince, in order to extract himself from his Paris difficulty, had recourse to one of those tricks of which he was past master.

Monsieur Laborie, who a little later became, under Monsieur Dupont de Nemours, Private Secretary to the Provisional Government, went to find Monsieur de Laborde, attaché to the National Guard; he told him of Monsieur de Talleyrand's departure: '*He is disposed,*' he said, '*to follow the Regency; it may appear necessary to you to prevent him, in order for him to be in a position to negotiate with the Allies, if needs be.*' The comedy was played to perfection. The Prince's carriages were loaded up, with great commotion; he set out at high noon, on the 30th of March: arriving at the Barrière d'Enfer, he was inexorably returned to his residence, despite his protestations. In case of Napoleon's miraculous return, the evidence was there, witnessing that the former Minister had wished to join Marie-Louise and that armed force had refused him passage.



## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 12

The proclamation of General the Prince Schwarzenberg – Alexander's speech – The capitulation of Paris

Meanwhile, on the arrival of the Allies, Comte Alexander de Laborde and Monsieur Tourton, senior officers of the National Guard, had been sent to General the Prince Schwarzenberg, who had been one of Napoleon's generals during the Russian Campaign. The General's proclamation was issued in Paris on the evening of the 30th of March. It read: *'For twenty years Europe has been drenched in blood and tears; attempts to put an end to these ills have proven vain, since there exists, in the very nature of the Government which oppresses you, an insurmountable obstacle to peace. Parisians, you know the state of your country: the preservation and tranquility of your city will be subject to careful attention on the part of the Allies. It is with these sentiments that Europe, in arms beneath your walls, addresses you.'*

What a magnificent acknowledgement of France's greatness: *Europe, in arms beneath your walls, addresses you!*

We, who had respected nothing, were granted respect by those whose cities we had ravaged, and who, in turn, had become stronger. We seemed to them a sacred nation; our land appeared to them like the fields of Elis which, by decree of the gods, no army could tread. Nevertheless, if Paris had thought it necessary to resist, within twenty four hours the result might quite easily have been different; but no one, except soldiers intoxicated by war and honor, desired Bonaparte any longer, and, in fear of his remaining in power, they rushed to open the gates.

Paris capitulated on the 31st of March 1814: the military surrender was signed, in the names of Marshals Mortier and Marmont, by Colonels Denis and Fabvier; the civil surrender took place in the name of the mayors of Paris. The municipal and departmental council were deputed to visit the Russian headquarters in order to settle the various articles: my companion in exile, Christian de Lamoignon, was one of the representatives. Alexander told them:

*'Your Emperor, who was my ally, recently entered the heart of my State and brought to it evils whose traces will be long lasting; the rights of defence led me here. I am far from wishing to cause France the ills which I have experienced. I am just, and I know it is not the fault of the French. The French are my friends, and I will prove it to them by rendering good for evil. Napoleon alone is my enemy. I promise my personal protection to the city of Paris; I will protect your National Guard which is composed of the elite of your citizens. It is for you to assure your future happiness; you must adopt a Government which will bring you and Europe peace. It is for you to voice your wishes: you will find me ready always to support your efforts.'*

Words which were swiftly realized: the joy of victory overrode every other interest, as far as the Allies were concerned. What must Alexander's feelings have been, as he gazed at the domed buildings of that city which the stranger only ever enters in order to admire, to enjoy the wonders of civilization and intellect; of that inviolable city, defended by its great men for twelve centuries; of that glorious capital which seemed protected now from Louis XIV's shadow, and Bonaparte's return!

BOOK XXII  
CHAPTER 13  
The Allies enter Paris

God had uttered one of those words which at rare intervals shatter the silence of eternity. Now, for the present generation, the hammer that Paris had only heard sound once before, rose to strike the hour; on the 25th of December 496, Rheims proclaimed the baptism of Clovis, and the gates of Lutetia opened to the Franks; on the 30th of March 1814, after the blood-stained baptism of Louis XVI, the old hammer, motionless for so long, rose anew in the belfry of the ancient monarchy; a second stroke rang out, and the Tartars entered Paris. In the intervening one thousand three hundred and eighteen years, foreigners had damaged the walls of our Empire's capital without ever finding the means to enter, save when they slipped in, summoned by our own divisions. The Normans besieged the city of the *Parisii*; the *Parisii* jeered at the sparrow-hawks they bore on their fists; Odo, child of Paris and future king, *rex futurus*, says Abbo, drove back the pirates from the North: the *Parisiens* let slip their eagles in 1814; the Allies entered the Louvre.

Bonaparte had waged war unjustly against Alexander, his admirer, who had begged for peace on his knees; Bonaparte had ordered the carnage at Borodino; he had forced the Russians to set fire to Moscow themselves; Bonaparte had plundered Berlin; humiliated its King, insulted its Queen: what reprisals were we then to expect? You shall see.

In the Floridas, I had wandered round nameless monuments, devastated long ago by conquerors of whom no trace remains, and had lived to see the Caucasian hordes encamped in the courtyard of the Louvre. In those events of history which, according to Montaigne: '*are feeble testimony to our worth and capacity*', *my tongue cleaves to my palate*:

*'Adhaeret lingua mea faucibus meis'*

The Allied Army entered Paris at midday on the 31st of March 1814, only ten days after the anniversary of the death of the Duc d'Enghien, on the 21st of March 1804. Was it worth Bonaparte's while to commit a deed so long remembered for the sake of so short a reign? The Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia rode at the head of their troops. I watched them marching along the boulevards. Stupefied and inwardly amazed, as if someone had torn from me my French identity and substituted a number by which I would henceforth be known in the mines of Siberia, at the same time I felt my exasperation with that man, whose glory had reduced us to this shame, increase.

However, this first invasion of the Allies remains unparalleled in the history of the world: peace, order, and moderation reigned everywhere; the shops re-opened; Russian guardsmen, six feet tall, were guided through the streets by little French urchins who laughed at them, as if they were wooden puppets or carnival mummers. The conquered might have been taken for conquerors; the latter, trembling at their success, had an apologetic air. The National Guard alone garrisoned the interior of Paris, with the exception of the houses in which foreign kings and princes lodged. On the 31st of March 1814, countless armies were occupying France; a few months later, all those troops re-crossed the frontier, without firing a shot, without shedding a drop of blood, after the return of the Bourbons. The former France found herself augmented on some of her frontiers; the ships and warehouses of Antwerp were shared with her; three hundred thousand prisoners scattered throughout the countries where victory or defeat had left them,

were restored to her. After twenty years of fighting, the sound of weapons ceased from one end of Europe to the other; Alexander departed, leaving us the looted masterpieces and the freedom enshrined in the Charter, freedom which we owed as much to his enlightenment as his influence. The head of the two supreme authorities, autocrat by means of both the sword and religion, he alone of all the sovereigns of Europe had understood that at the stage of civilization which France had attained, she could only be governed by virtue of a free constitution.

In our quite natural hostility towards foreigners, we have confused the invasions of 1814 and 1815, which were in no sense alike.

Alexander considered himself merely an instrument of Providence and took no credit himself. Madame de Staël complimenting him on the good fortune which his subjects, lacking a constitution, enjoyed in being governed by him, he made his well-known reply: *'I am merely a happy accident.'*

A young man, in a Paris street, expressed to him his admiration at the affability with which he greeted the humblest citizens; he replied: *'Are sovereigns not made for that?'* He had no wish to inhabit the Tuileries, remembering that Bonaparte had taken his pleasure in the palaces of Vienna, Berlin and Moscow.

Gazing at the statue of Napoleon on the column in the Place Vendôme, he remarked: *'If I were as high up as that, I would be afraid of vertigo.'*

When he was touring the Tuileries Palace, he was shown the Salon de la Paix: *'What use,'* he said laughing, *'was this room to Bonaparte?'*

On the day Louis XVIII entered Paris, Alexander hid behind a window, wearing no mark of distinction, to watch the procession pass.

He frequently displayed elegant and charming manners. Visiting a madhouse, he asked a woman if the number who had gone mad with love was considerable: *'Not until now,'* she replied, *'but it is to be feared it will increase from the time of Your Majesty's entering Paris.'*

One of Napoleon's grand dignitaries said to the Tsar: *'We have been waiting and hoping here for your arrival, for a long time, Sire.'* – *'I would have come sooner,'* he replied, *'blame French valor alone for my delay.'* it is known that when crossing the Rhine he had regretted not being able to return peacefully to his family.

At the Hôtel des Invalides, he found the maimed soldiers who had defeated him at Austerlitz: they were silent and sombre; only the sound of their wooden legs echoed in the empty courtyards and denuded church; Alexander was moved by this sound made by brave men: he ordered that twelve Russian cannon should be given to them.

A proposal to change the name of the Pont d'Austerlitz was made to him: *'No,'* he said, *'it is enough for me to have crossed that bridge with my army.'*

Alexander had something calm and sorrowful about him: he went about Paris, on horseback or on foot, without his suite and without affectation. He seemed surprised at his triumph; his almost tender gaze wandered over a population whom he seemed to consider superior to himself: one would have said that he found himself a barbarian among us, as a Roman would have felt ashamed in Athens. Perhaps he also

reflected that these same Frenchmen had appeared in his burnt-out capital; that his soldiers were in turn masters of Paris where he might have found some of the extinguished torches by which Moscow was freed and consumed. This sense of destiny, of changing fortunes, of the common suffering of nations and kings, must have struck a mind as religious as his profoundly.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 14

#### Bonaparte at Fontainebleau – The Regency at Blois

What was the *victor* of Borodino doing? As soon as he heard of Alexander's decision, he sent orders to Major Maillard de Lescourt of the artillery to blow up the powder-magazine at Grenelle: Rostopchin had set fire to Moscow, but he had evacuated the inhabitants first. From Fontainebleau, to which he had returned, Napoleon advanced as far as Villejuif: there he looked down on Paris; foreign soldiers were guarding the city gates; the conqueror recalled the days when his grenadiers had kept watch on the ramparts of Berlin, Moscow, and Vienna.

Events erase other events: how insignificant today seems the grief of Henri IV learning at Villejuif of the death of Gabrielle, and returning thence to Fontainebleau! Bonaparte returned to that solitude also; nothing awaited him there but the memory of his august prisoner: the captive of peace had not long since departed the palace in order to leave it free for the captive of war, '*so swiftly does misfortune fill a place.*'

The Regency had retired to Blois. Bonaparte had given orders for the Empress and the King of Rome to leave Paris, saying he would prefer to see them at the bottom of the Seine than led to Vienna in triumph; but at the same time he urged Joseph to remain in the capital. His brother's flight made him furious, and he accused the King of Spain of ruining everything. The Ministers, the members of the Regency, Napoleon's brothers, his wife and son arrived at Blois in disorder, swept away by the debacle: wagons, baggage-vans, carriages, everything was there; even the royal coaches were there and were dragged through the mud of the Beauce to Chambord, the only morsel of France left to Louis XIV's heirs. Some of the ministers crossed over, and went to hide in Brittany, while Cambacérès was carried in state in a sedan-chair through the steep streets of Blois. Various rumors were current; there was talk of two camps and a general requisition. For several days they knew nothing of what was happening in Paris; the uncertainty only ended with the arrival of a carter whose pass was signed Sacken. Soon the Russian General Shuvalov arrived at the Auberge de la Galère: he was promptly besieged by the grandees, desperate to obtain visas from him for their headlong flight. However, before leaving Blois, they all drew on Regency funds for their travelling expenses and arrears of salary: they grasped their passports in one hand and their money in the other, taking care at the same time to assure the Provisional Government of their support, not losing their heads. Madame Mère and her brother, Cardinal Fesch, left for Rome. Prince Esterhazy arrived on behalf of Francis II to fetch Marie-Louise and her son. Joseph and Jérôme headed for Switzerland, after trying to compel the Empress, in vain, to share their fate. Marie-Louise hastened to join her father: indifferently attached to Bonaparte, she found thereby the means to console herself, and rejoiced at being delivered from the double tyranny of a husband and master. When, the following year, Bonaparte brought this same confused flight on the Bourbons, the latter, barely free of their long tribulations, had not enjoyed fourteen years of unexampled prosperity in which to grow accustomed to the comfort of a throne.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 15

#### The publication of my pamphlet – *De Bonaparte et Des Bourbons*

However Napoleon was not yet dethroned; more than forty thousand of the best soldiers in the world accompanied him; he could withdraw beyond the Loire; the French armies which had arrived from Spain were making growling noises in the south; the seething military population might still discharge its lava; even among the foreign leaders, there was still talk of Napoleon or his son ruling France: for two days Alexander hesitated. Monsieur de Talleyrand was secretly inclined, as I have said, to the policy which favored crowning the King of Rome, since he dreaded the Bourbons; if he did not enter unreservedly into the plan for the Regency of Marie-Louise, it was because, Napoleon still being alive, he, the Prince of Benevento, feared that he would be unable to retain control during a minority threatened by the existence of a restless, unpredictable and enterprising man still in the prime of life.

It was during these critical days that I launched my pamphlet *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons* in order to turn the scale: the effect is well known. I threw myself headlong into the fray to serve as a shield to nascent liberty against a tyranny which was still active and whose strength was increased threefold by despair. I spoke in the name of the Legitimacy, in order to lend my words the authority of pragmatic politics. I apprised France of what the old royal family represented; I told her how many members of that family were still alive, and their names and characters; it was as if I were listing the children of the Emperor of China, so thoroughly had the Republic and Empire invaded the present and relegated the Bourbons to the past. Louis XVIII declared, as I have mentioned several times elsewhere, that my *pamphlet* had been more use to him than an army of a hundred thousand men; he might have added that it acted as proof of his existence. I helped to crown him for a second time, by the favorable outcome of the Spanish War.

From the very beginning of my political career, I had made myself unpopular with the people, but from that moment on I also lost favor with the powerful. All those who had been slaves under Bonaparte detested me; on the other hand, I was suspect among all those who wished to return France to a state of vassalage. Of all the sovereigns, only Bonaparte himself was on my side at first. He perused my pamphlet at Fontainebleau: the Duke of Bassano had brought it to him; he discussed it impartially, saying: '*This is right, this is not right. I have nothing to reproach Chateaubriand with; he opposed me when I was in power; but those swine, such and such!*' and he named them.

My admiration for Bonaparte has always been great and sincere, even when I attacked Napoleon most fiercely.

Posterity is not as just in its assessments as they say; there are passions, infatuations, errors of distance as there are passions and errors of proximity. When posterity admires someone unreservedly it is scandalized if the contemporaries of the man it admires had not the same opinion it holds itself. Yet, it is obvious: the things which offended in that person are done with; his infirmities died with him; of him, only the imperishable life remains; but the evil he caused is no less real; evil in itself and in essence, evil above all for those who endured it.

It is fashionable today to exaggerate Bonaparte's victories: those who suffered have disappeared; we no longer hear the curses, the cries of pain, the distress of the victims; we no longer see France exhausted,

with only women to till her soil; we no longer see parents arrested as hostages for their sons, or the inhabitants of a village sentenced one and all to punishments applicable to a deserter; we no longer see conscription notices posted on street corners, the passers-by crowding to see those vast death-warrants, searching, in consternation for the names of children, brothers, friends and neighbors. We forget that everyone mourned the victories; we forget that the slightest allusion antagonistic to Bonaparte, in the theatre, that escaped the censors, was seized on with joy; we forget that the people, the Court, the generals, the ministers, and Napoleon's relatives were weary of his oppression and his conquests, weary of that game which was always won and always in play, of that existence which was brought into question each morning by the impossibility of peace.

The reality of our sufferings is revealed by the catastrophe itself: if France had been devoted to Bonaparte, would she have rejected him twice, abruptly and totally, without making a last effort to retain him? If France owed everything to Bonaparte, glory, liberty, order, prosperity, industry, commerce, manufacture, monuments, literature, and fine arts; if the nation had achieved nothing itself prior to his period of rule; if the Republic had neither defended nor enlarged its borders, devoid of genius and courage, then would not France have been truly ungrateful, truly cowardly, in allowing Napoleon to fall into the hands of his enemies, or at least in not protesting against the captivity of so great a benefactor?

This reproach, which might be justly levelled against us, is not however levelled against us, and why? Because it is evident that, at the moment of his fall, France did not wish to defend Napoleon; on the contrary, she deliberately abandoned him; in our bitter distaste, we no longer recognized anything in him but the author and despiser of our woes. The Allies did not conquer us: it was we ourselves, choosing between two scourges, who renounced the shedding of our blood, which had ceased to flow for freedom.

The Republic had been too cruel, it is true, but everyone had hoped it would end, that sooner or later we would recover our rights, while retaining the defensive conquests it had made in the Alps and on the Rhine. All the victories it had brought us were gained in our name; for the Republic it was a question of France solely; it was ever France that had triumphed, that had conquered; it was our soldiers who had achieved everything and for whom triumphs or funeral celebrations were established; the generals (and there were some very great ones) won an honorable but humble place in public memory: such were Marceau, Moreau, Hoche, Joubert; the two latter destined to hold command under Bonaparte, who, new to glory, quickly encountered General Hoche, and rendered illustrious by his jealousy that warrior and peacemaker, who died shortly after his triumphs at Altenkirchen, Neuwied and Kleinnister.

Under the Empire, we vanished; it was no longer a question of us, everything belonged to Bonaparte: *I have ordered, I have conquered, I have spoken; my eagles, my crown, my blood, my family, my subjects.*

Yet what happened in those two situations at once similar and contrasting? We did not abandon the Republic in its reverses; it killed us, but it honored us; we avoided the shame of being someone else's property; thanks to our efforts, it was not invaded; the Russians, defeated beyond the mountains, had just shot their bolt at Zürich.

As for Bonaparte, he, despite his vast acquisitions, succumbed, not because he was defeated, but because France no longer wanted him. A mighty lesson! One that we ought always to remember, that there is a germ of death in everything that wounds human dignity.

Free spirits of every shade of opinion employed a common language at the time when my pamphlet was published. Lafayette, Camille Jordan, Ducis, Lemercier, Lanjuinais, Madame de Staël, Chénier, Benjamin Constant, Lebrun, thought and wrote as I did. Lanjuinais said: *'We have been seeking a master among men whom the Romans did not desire as slaves.'*

Chénier treated Bonaparte no more favorably:

*'A Corsican devoured the French inheritance.  
You the elite, you heroes reaped in battle,  
You martyrs, dragged with glory to the scaffold,  
You died content with other hopes perchance.  
Waves of blood, of tears have drenched France,  
Those tears; that blood, one man inherited.*

.....  
*Believer, for a while, I praised his victories,  
In forum, senate, pleasures, and festivities.*

.....  
*But, when he hurried home again, in flight,  
Forsaking laurels for an Empire, overnight,  
I did not bow before his glittering infamy;  
My voice has ever been oppression's enemy;  
Watching while waves of flatterers, or worse,  
Sold him, the State, their adulatory verse,  
The court, the tyrant, caught no sight of me;  
For I sang not of power, I sang of glory.'*

(Promenade, 1805)

Madame de Staël passed no less severe a judgement on Napoleon:

*'Would it not provide a fine example to the human species, if the Directors (the five members of the Directory), very unwarlike men, could rise again from their ashes and call Napoleon to account for the lost frontiers of the Rhine and the Alps, conquered by the Republic, for the two-fold entry of foreign armies into Paris; for the three million French who perished from Cadiz to Moscow; above all for that sympathy the nations felt for the cause of French freedom, which is now transformed into an inveterate aversion?'*

(*Considérations sur la Révolution française*)

Let us listen to Benjamin Constant:

*'He who, for twelve years, proclaimed he was destined to conquer the world, has made honorable amends for his pretensions...*

*Even before his territory was invaded, he was the victim of problems he could not conceal. His frontiers were scarcely breached, when he divested himself of all his conquests. He required the abdication of one*



*of his brothers; he agreed the expulsion of another; without being asked he announced his renunciation of it all.*

*While royalty, though conquered, never lost its dignity, why did the conqueror of the earth yield at the first obstacle? His relatives' pleas, we are told, tore at his heart. Were not those who perished in Russia from the triple agony of wounds, cold and hunger, part of that family? Yet, while they died, deserted by their leader, that leader thought he was secure; now, the danger he shares has imbued him suddenly with feeling.*

*Fear is a poor counsellor, especially where there is a lack of conscience: there is no moderation in adversity, as in success, except through morality. Where morality holds no sway, success destroys itself in mania, adversity in debasement...*

*What effect did that blind fear, that sudden faint-heartedness, without precedent in all our many troubles, have on a courageous nation? National pride found (it was at fault) a certain compensation in being oppressed by a leader who was at least invincible. Today what remains? No more prestige, no more triumphs, a mutilated Empire, the world's execration, a throne whose glory is tarnished, whose trophies have been toppled, and whose only entourage are the wandering shades of the Duc d'Enghien, of Pichegru, of the many others who were murdered to establish it.'*

Was I more extreme than that in writing *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*? Do not the proclamations of the authorities in 1814, which I am going to reproduce in a moment, repeat, affirm, and confirm these various opinions? That the authorities who expressed themselves in this way have been revealed as cowardly and degraded by their initial admiration has harmed the writers of these addresses, but does not reduce the force of their arguments.

I could multiply these quotations endlessly, but I will repeat no more than two, because of the opinion held regarding the two authors: Béranger, that constant and admirable admirer of Bonaparte, did not think it necessary to excuse himself, witness these words: '*My enthusiastic and constant admiration for the Emperor's genius, my idolatry, had never blinded me to the tyranny ever present in the Empire.*' Paul-Louis Courier, speaking of Napoleon's advent to the throne, said: '*What is the point, tell me..., of a man like him, Bonaparte, a soldier, military leader, chief captain of the world, wanting to be called Majesty! To be Bonaparte and wish to be Sire! He aspires to descend: rather he thinks he is ascending by imitating kings. He prefers a title to a name. Poor man, his ideas are inferior to his success... Caesar understood it all better, and was a different kind of man: he made no use of worn-out titles; but of his name he made a title superior to that of kings.*' Our living talents have taken the same path to freedom, Monsieur de Lamartine at the rostrum, Monsieur de Latouche in retirement; in two or three of his finest odes, Monsieur Victor Hugo has echoed the sound of those noble tones:

*'In the gloom of crime, in the glare of victory,  
That man oblivious to God, who sent him, etc.'*

Finally, beyond our frontiers, the judgement of Europe was just as severe. I will only quote the sentiments of the English Opposition, who accepted our Revolution in its entirety and supported it entirely: read Mackintosh in his defence of Peltier. Sheridan, at the time of the Peace of Amiens, said in Parliament:

*'Whoever arrives in England, after leaving France, thinks to escape a prison in order to breathe the air and spirit of freedom.'*

Lord Byron, in his Ode to Napoleon, treats him with indignation:

*T' is done – but yesterday a king!  
And arm'd with kings to strive,  
And now thou art a nameless thing  
So abject – yet alive.*

The whole ode is in this style; each stanza bids to outdo the last, which did not prevent Lord Byron celebrating the grave on St Helena. Poets are birds: any sound makes them sing.

Whenever the finest of minds of great diversity find themselves in agreement in their judgement, no admiration sincere or insincere, no arrangement of facts, no system dreamed up after the fact, can change the sentence. What! Could one, as Napoleon did, substitute his will for law, persecute all independent life, enjoy dishonoring men of character, trouble existence, violate private morals as well as public freedom; and could the generous-minded opposition rising up against these enormities, be declared slanderous and blasphemous! Who would defend the cause of the weak against the strong, if courage, exposed to the vengeance of present vileness, had still to wait on the blame cast by cowards yet to come!

That illustrious minority, formed in part from the children of the Muses, gradually became the national majority: as the Empire drew to an end everyone hated the Imperial tyranny. A grave reproach is associated with Bonaparte's memory: he rendered his yoke so heavy that the hostile feeling against foreigners was weakened, and invasion, deplorable though it is to recall today, seemed, at the moment of its accomplishment, something of a deliverance: that is indeed the Republican opinion, enunciated by my brave and unfortunate friend Carrel. *'The return of the Bourbons'* said Carnot in turn, *'produced universal delight in France; they were welcomed with an inexpressible effusion of feeling, former Republicans sharing sincerely in the universal transports of joy. Napoleon had persecuted them especially; all the classes in society had suffered so greatly, that there was no one to be found who was not truly intoxicated with it all.'*

There is only one authority lacking to sanction and confirm these opinions: Bonaparte is charged with certifying their truth. Taking leave of his soldiers in the courtyard of Fontainebleau, he admitted proudly that France rejected him: *'France herself,'* he said, *'has chosen another course.'* An unexpected and memorable confession, whose weight nothing can diminish, whose value nothing can reduce.

God, in his infinite patience, sooner or later brings justice: in the moments when Heaven seems asleep, all will be well if an honest man's disapproval wakes, acting as a brake on absolute power. France has never repudiated noble spirits, who denounced her servitude, when all were prostrate, when there were many advantages in being so, many blessings to be received through flattery, much persecution to be suffered through sincerity. Honor then to Lafayette, De Staël, Benjamin Constant, Camille Jordan, Ducis, Lermercier, Lanjuinais, and Chénier, who, standing amidst the swirling crowd of nations and kings, dared to scorn conquest and protest against tyranny!

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 16

#### The Senate issues the Decree of Deposition

On the 2nd of April, the Senators, to whom we owe only one article of the Charter of 1814, the unworthy article which guaranteed their pensions, decreed Bonaparte's deposition. If the decree of liberation for France, an infamy on the part of those who issued it, was an affront to the human race, at the same time it taught posterity the cost of greatness and success, when they disdain to found themselves on morality, justice and liberty.

#### *DECREE OF THE SENATE CONSERVATEUR*

*'The Senate Conservateur decrees, given that in a constitutional monarchy the monarchy only exists in virtue of the constitution or the social covenant;*

*That Napoleon Bonaparte, firm and prudent in Government for many years, gave the nation reason to expect, in future, acts of wisdom and justice; but then tore up the covenant which united the French people, in particular by levying taxes, establishing those charges other than by virtue of the law, against the express tenor of the speech he gave on mounting the throne, in conformance with article 53 of the constitution of 28 Floréal, Year XII;*

*That he committed that assault on the rights of the people, at the very time when he chose to adjourn for no reason the Legislative Body, and suppress, as criminal, a report of that body, whose title and report to the national representatives he contested;*

*That he started a series of wars in violation of article 50 of the constitutional act of Year VIII, which stated that a declaration of war is to be proposed, discussed, decreed and promulgated, like the law;*

*That he has, unconstitutionally, issued several decrees carrying sentence of death, namely the two decrees of 5th March last, tending to imply that a war which took place only in the interests of his boundless ambition was to be treated as a national war;*

*That he has violated the laws of the constitution by his decrees regarding State prisons;*

*That he has done away with ministerial responsibility, confused all powers, and destroyed the independence of the judiciary;*

*Considering that the freedom of the press, established and consecrated as a national right, has been constantly subjected to arbitrary police censure, and that at the same time he has continually used the press to fill France and Europe with fabricated information, false maxims, doctrines favoring tyranny, and insults against foreign governments;*

*That the acts and reports, heard by the Senate, have been subject to alteration in the process of publication;*

*Considering that, instead of ruling solely with a view to the interests, well-being and glory of the French people, according to the terms of his speech, Napoleon has capped the country's misfortunes by his*

*refusal to negotiate conditions that the national interest obliged him to accept and which did not compromise the honor of France; by the way he has abused the resources of men and money entrusted to him; by abandoning the wounded without help, without medical supplies, without means of subsistence; by various measures whose results were the ruin of cities, the depopulation of countries, famine and contagious illness:*

*Considering that, for all these reasons, the Imperial Government established by the senatus-consulte of 28th Floréal, Year XII, or 18th of May 1804, has ceased to exist, and that the manifest wish of all French people calls for an order of things whose first result would be the re-establishment of universal peace, which would also be a period of solemn reconciliation between all the States of the great European family, the Senate declares and decrees as follows: that Napoleon be deposed from the throne; that hereditary rights be abolished in his family; and that the French people and the army be freed from their oath of fidelity towards him.'*

The Roman Senate was less harsh when it declared Nero a public enemy: history is merely a repetition of the same events applied to different men and varying times.

Can you imagine the Emperor reading the official document at Fontainebleau? What must he have thought of what had happened, and of the men he had summoned to complicity in his suppression of our freedoms? When I published my pamphlet *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*, could I have anticipated that it would be amplified and converted into a decree of deposition by the Senate? What prevented the legislators, in the days of previous success, from discovering the ills for which they blamed Bonaparte as the author, from realizing that the constitution had been violated? *What sudden zeal for the freedom of the press seized these deaf mutes?* How could those who had showered adulation on Napoleon in respect of each of his wars, now discover that he had undertaken them only *in the interests of his boundless ambition?* What suddenly moved those, who had thrown him so many conscripts to devour, to feel on behalf of the wounded soldiers, *abandoned without help, without medical supplies, without means of subsistence?* There are times when one ought only to dispense contempt economically, because of the great number who deserve it: I will handle them sparingly for the moment, since they will deserve it again during and after the Hundred Days.

When I ask what Napoleon at Fontainebleau thought of the actions of the Senate, the answer is extant: an order of the day of the 5th of April 1814, not officially published, but replicated in various newspapers outside the capital, thanks the army for its loyalty, adding:

*'The Senate has taken the liberty of disposing of the government of France; it has forgotten that it owes the power it has now abused to the Emperor; that it was he who saved half the members from the storm of the Revolution, dragged the rest from obscurity and protected them against the hatred of the nation. The Senate has referred to the articles of the Constitution in order to overthrow it; it has felt no shame in blaming the Emperor, without noting that, as the supreme state body, it has taken part in all these events. The Senate has felt no shame in speaking of public libels against foreign governments: it has forgotten that they were drawn up in its name. As long as fortune continued to shine on their sovereign, these men remained loyal and not a word was heard about abuse of power. If the Emperor has shown his scorn of men, as they have attributed blame to him, then the world will recognize today that he had his reasons which have motivated his scorn.'*

It is a homage paid by Bonaparte himself to the freedom of the press: he must have considered there was some good in it, since it offered him a last shelter and a last recourse.

And I who struggle against the age, I who seek to make it account to itself for what it has seen, I who write this so long after those events, in the reign of Louis-Philippe, false heir to so great a heritage, what am I in the hands of Time, that mighty devourer of centuries that I believe to have been ordained, of Time that makes me pirouette with him through space?

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 17

#### The Hôtel de la Rue Saint-Florentin – Monsieur de Talleyrand

Alexander stayed at Monsieur de Talleyrand's residence. I was not involved in any of the discussions: they can be read of in the Abbé de Pradt's account and in those of the various intriguers who held in their dirty little hands the fate of one of the greatest men in history and the destiny of the world. I counted for nothing in politics apart from that of the masses; there was not a single meddling subordinate who failed to possess more right and favor in the antechambers of power than I: a future member of the potential Restoration, I waited under the windows, in the street.

Due to the machinations within that residence in the Rue Saint-Florentin, the Senate Conservateur named a Provisional Government composed of General Beurnonville, Senator Jaucourt, the Duke de Dalberg, the Abbé de Montesquiou, and Dupont de Nemours; the Prince of Benevento awarded himself the Presidency.

On encountering that name for the first time, I ought to say more about a personage who played a remarkable part in public affairs at that time; but I will reserve his portrait for the final part of my *Memoirs*.

The intrigue which detained Monsieur de Talleyrand in Paris, during the Allies' entry, was the reason for his success at the commencement of the Restoration. The Emperor of Russia knew him, having met him at Tilsit. In the absence of the French authorities Alexander stayed at the Hôtel de l'Infantado, which the owner of the residence hastened to offer him.

From that moment Monsieur de Talleyrand passed for the universal arbitrator; his rooms became the center of negotiations. Composing the Provisional Government as he wished, he placed there the partners in his game of *whist*; the Abbé de Montesquiou alone figured there at the Legitimacy's request.

It was to the barrenness of the Bishop of Autun that the first works of the Restoration were entrusted: he blasted that Restoration with sterility, and communicated to it the incipient mark of death.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 18

#### The Proclamations of the Provisional Government – The Constitution proposed by the Senate

The first acts of the Provisional Government, as directed by its President, were proclamations addressed to the army and the people. *‘Soldiers,’* they said to the former, *‘France has but now broken the yoke under which it has groaned with you for so many years. Consider all you have suffered from that tyranny. Soldiers it is time to end the country’s misfortunes. You are her noblest offspring; you cannot ascribe to what has ravaged her, what has sought to make your name hateful to all nations, which would even have compromised your glory if a man who IS NOT EVEN FRENCH could ever diminish the honor of our arms and the nobility of our soldiers.’*

So, in the eyes of his most servile slaves, he who brought them so many victories was *not even French!* When, in the days of the League, Du Bourg gave up the Bastille to Henri IV, he refused to doff the black scarf and take the money offered to him for surrendering the place. Begged to acknowledge the King, he replied *‘that he was no doubt an excellent Prince, but that he had given his word to Monsieur de Mayenne. Moreover that Brissac was a traitor, and, to support that, he would fight him between four pikes, in the King’s presence, and eat the heart from his breast.’* How different the men and the age!

On the 4th of April a new proclamation of the Provisional Government to the French nation, appeared; it said:

*‘Emerging from your civil discord you chose as leader a man who appeared on the world’s stage with the character of greatness. On the ruins of anarchy, he founded only tyranny; he might at least in gratitude have become French like you; he has never done so. He has not ceased to wage pointless, unmotivated and unjust wars, in adventuring on which he sought to become famous. Perhaps he still dreams of vast designs, even though unheard-of defeats punish the vanity and abuse of conquest so emphatically. He has ruled neither in the national interest, nor even the interest of his own despotism. He has destroyed everything he sought to create, and re-vitalized everything he sought to destroy. He believes only in force; force now overcomes him: a just reward for foolish ambition.’*

Incontestable truths, justifiable criticism; but who uttered this criticism? What was become of my poor little pamphlet, jostled by these virulent speeches? On the same day, the 4th of April, the Provisional Government proscribed the marks and emblems of the Imperial Government; if the Arc de Triomphe had existed, they would have torn it down. Mailhe, who had once voted for the death of Louis XVI, Cambacérès, who was first to welcome Napoleon as Emperor, greeted the Provisional Government’s actions with enthusiasm.

On the 6th, the Senate printed a constitution: it was fairly closed based on the concepts of the future Charter; the Senate was retained as the senior Chamber; the *‘nobility’* of the senators was pronounced immutable and hereditary; to their entitlement to a Majorat was added the granting of Sénatoreries; the Constitution allowed these titles and *majorats* to be transmitted to their possessor’s descendants: it was fortunate that these ignoble inheritances *‘involved the Fates’*, as the ancients said.

The sordid effrontery of these senators who, in the midst of the invasion of their country, did not for a moment lose sight of the main chance, was striking even amidst the immensities of public events.

Would it not have been more convenient to the Bourbons to continue on their arrival with the established government, a docile Legislature, a private slavish Senate, a shackled Press? On reflection, the thing appears impossible: natural; independence, standing upright once more in the absence of the chains that bowed it, had resumed its upward path given the weakness of those bonds. If the legitimate princes had dismissed Bonaparte's army as they should have done (that was Napoleon's opinion on Elba), and if they had at the same time retained the Imperial mode of government, it would have been enough simply to destroy the instrument of his glory in order to retain the instrument of tyranny: the Charter was Louis XVIII's ransom.



## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 19

The arrival of the Comte d'Artois – Bonaparte's abdication at Fontainebleau

On the 12th of April, the Comte d'Artois arrived in the capacity of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom. Three or four hundred men rode before him; I was one of them. He charmed by his graciousness, a contrast with Empire manners. The delighted French recognized their former aspect in his person, their former politeness, and their former way of speaking; the crowd surrounded and pressed around him; a consoling apparition from the past, a dual recourse, being opposed to the foreign conquerors and opposed to the continuing menace of Bonaparte. Alas! That Prince only set foot on French soil once more in order to see his son assassinated and to return to die in the land of exile from which he had come: there are men over whose necks life is thrown like a chain.

I was presented to the King's brother; he had been given my pamphlet to read, otherwise he would not have known my name; he recalled neither having seen me at Louis XVI's court, nor in camp at Thionville, and unquestionably had never heard of the *Génie du Christianisme*: it was understandable. When one has suffered greatly for a long time, one only thinks of oneself; selfish adversity is a companion somewhat cold, and hard to please; it haunts one; it leaves no room for any other feeling, never leaves you, clasps your knees and your coat.

The day before the Comte d'Artois' arrival, Napoleon, after fruitless negotiations with Alexander conducted by Monsieur de Caulaincourt, had published his act of abdication.

*'The Allied Powers having proclaimed that the Emperor Napoleon was the sole obstacle to the re-establishment of peace in Europe, the Emperor Napoleon, loyal to his oath, declares, on behalf of his thrones and heirs, that he renounces the thrones of France and Italy, because there is no personal sacrifice, even that of his life, which he is not ready to make in the interests of the French people.'*

The Emperor wasted no time in giving the lie, in an equally resounding manner, to these resounding words, by his return: he needed only enough time to visit the island of Elba. He remained at Fontainebleau until the 20th of April.

The 20th of April having arrived, Napoleon descended the double flight of steps leading to the peristyle of the deserted palace of the Capet monarchy. A few grenadiers, the remnants of the soldiers who had conquered Europe, formed up in line in the great courtyard, as if on their final battlefield; they were surrounded by ancient trees, mutilated companions of Francis I and Henri IV. Bonaparte addressed these words to those last witnesses to his battles:

*'Generals, officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of my Old Guard, I bid you farewell: for twenty years I have been satisfied with you; I have always found you on the paths of glory.'*

*The Allied Powers have armed the whole of Europe against me, sections of the army have betrayed their duty, and France herself has chosen another destiny.*

*With you and the brave men who have remained loyal to me, I could have carried on a civil war for three years: but France would have suffered, which is contrary to the aims I adopted.*

*Be faithful to the new King whom France has chosen; do not desert our beloved country, which has been unhappy for so long! Love her always, and love her well, that dear country of ours.*

*Do not pity my fate; I will always be happy if I know that you are happy.*

*I might have died; nothing would have been easier for me; but I will always follow the path of honor. I have still to write the history of all we have achieved.*

*I cannot embrace you all; but I will embrace your general! ...General, come here...' (He clasped General Petit in his arms.) 'Bring me the eagle! ...' (He kissed it.) 'Beloved eagle! May these kisses resound in the hearts of all my brave lads! ...Farewell, my children! ...My prayers will always be with you; preserve your memories of me.'*

Having spoken, Napoleon struck his tent which covered the world.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 20

#### Napoleon's Journey to the Isle of Elba

Bonaparte had requested that the Alliance provide Commissioners to escort him to the island which the sovereigns granted him as his own exclusive property and as a gift to his heirs. Count Shuvalov was appointed to represent Russia, General Koller Austria, Colonel Campbell England and Count Truchsess von Waldeburg Prussia; the latter wrote *Napoleon's Itinerary from Fontainebleau to the Isle of Elba*. This pamphlet and that of the Abbé de Pradt on his Polish Embassy are the two accounts which most distressed Napoleon. Doubtless he regretted the period of liberal censorship, when he had poor Palm, a German bookseller, shot, for having distributed Monsieur de Gentz's pamphlet: *Germany in her Deep Humiliation*. Nuremberg, at the time of publication of that pamphlet, being still a free city, did not belong to France: was Palm obliged to have divined its conquest!

Count von Waldburg continues his account thus:

*'The Emperor started his journey, with four other carriages, on the 21st around midday, having again had a long conversation with General Kohler of which this is a summary: "Well! Yesterday you heard my speech to the Old Guard; you enjoyed it, and you saw the effect it produced. That's how one must speak and act with them, and if Louis XVIII fails to follow my example, he will make nothing of the French soldier"...*

The cries of: "*Long live the Emperor!*" ceased as soon as the French troops no longer accompanied us. At Moulins, we saw the first white cockades, and the inhabitants welcomed us with shouts of: "*Long live the Allies!*" Colonel Campbell left Lyons before us, to find an English frigate at Toulon or Marseilles which could carry Napoleon to his island, as he wished.

*At Lyons, which we passed through at about eleven at night, a few people gathered to shout: "Vive Napoleon!" On the 24th, towards noon, we met Marshal Augereau near Valence. The Emperor and the Marshal got down from their carriages. Napoleon removed his hat, and held out his arms to Augereau, who embraced him, but without saluting him. "Where are you off to like this?" the Emperor asked, taking him by the arm, "are you going to Court?" Augereau replied that for the present he was going to Lyons: they walked together for about a quarter of an hour, following the road towards Valence. The Emperor reproached the Marshal concerning his conduct towards him, and said: "Your statement is quite foolish; why insult me? It's enough to say: 'The wish of the Nation having been pronounced in favor of a new sovereign, the army's duty is to conform to it. Long live the King! Long live Louis XVIII!'" Augereau then began to address Bonaparte as tu also and in turn reproached him bitterly regarding his insatiable ambition, to which he had sacrificed everything, even the happiness of the whole of France. This speech wearying Napoleon, he left the Marshal's side brusquely, embraced him, removed his hat once more, and threw himself into the carriage.*

*Augereau, his hands behind his back, made no move towards the helmet on his head; and, when the Emperor had re-entered his carriage, merely made a dismissive gesture of his hand in token of farewell'...*

*'On the 25th, we arrived at Orange; we were greeted with shouts of: "Long live the King! Long live Louis XVIII!"*

*On the same day, in the morning, at a halt a short distance before Avignon, where the horses needed to be changed, the Emperor found a crowd of people gathered waiting for him to pass by, who welcomed him with shouts of: "Long live the King! Long live the Allies! Down with the tyrant, the scoundrel, the lousy beggar!"...This crowd continued to spew out a flood of invective against him.*

*We did what we could to terminate this disgraceful scene, and broke up the crowd attacking the carriage; we could not get these maniacs to stop insulting that man, whom, they said, had made them so wretched and still had no other wish than to add to their misery...*

*Everywhere we passed, we were greeted in the same manner. At Orgon, a little town where the horses were changed, the people's anger reached new heights; before the very inn where we halted, they had erected a gallows from which a blood-stained mannequin was hanging, dressed in French uniform, with a placard on its chest which read: "Such sooner or later will be the tyrant's fate."*

*The crowd clung to Napoleon's carriage and tried to see his face to insult him more savagely. The Emperor concealed himself behind General Bertrand as much as he could; he was pale and haggard, not saying a word. By dint of haranguing the crowd, we managed to deter them from their hostile course of action.*

*Count Shuvalov, beside Bonaparte's carriage, addressed the populace in this manner: "Aren't you ashamed, insulting an unfortunate defenseless man? He is humiliated enough by the sad position he finds himself in, he who thought to hand down laws to the world and who finds himself today at the mercy of your generosity! Leave him be; look at him: you will see that contempt is the only weapon you should employ against a man who is no longer dangerous. It would be beneath the French nation to take any other vengeance!" The people applauded this speech, and Bonaparte, seeing the effect it produced, made signs of approbation to Shuvalov, and then thanked him for the service he had rendered him.*

*At a quarter of a league this side of Orgon, he thought it necessary to take the precaution of disguising himself: he put on a wretched blue frock coat, set a round hat with a white cockade on his head, and mounted a post-horse to gallop in front of the carriage, wishing in this way to pass for a courier. As we could not accompany him, we arrived at Saint-Cannat well after him. Not knowing what means he had taken to elude the crowd, we thought he might be in great danger, since we could see his carriage surrounded by furious men trying to open the doors: fortunately they were tightly shut, which saved General Bertrand. The tenacity of the women astonished us most; they begged us to hand him over to them, saying: "He has truly merited it by his wrongs towards us and towards you, so that we are only asking something justifiable."*

*At half a league from Saint-Cannat, we met with the Emperor's carriage, who soon afterwards entered a humble inn situated on the main road and called La Calade. We followed him, and it was only when we were within that we learned of the disguise he had adopted and his arrival at the inn favored by that strange clothing; he had only been accompanied by a single courier; his suite, from the General down to the scullion, were sporting white cockades, with which they seemed to have provisioned themselves in advance. His valet, who arrived before us, asked us to address the Emperor as Colonel Campbell, since*

*on arrival he was announced as such to the landlady. We promised to conform to his wish, and I was the first to enter a room of sorts where I was struck by seeing the former ruler of the world plunged in profound reflection, his head buried in his hands. I did not acknowledge him at first, and approached him. He leapt up in surprise hearing someone walk in, allowing me to see his face wet with tears. He made a sign to me to say nothing, made me sit down beside him, and all the time the landlady was in the room spoke to me of trivial things only. But when she had left, he took up his former position again. I thought it right to leave him alone; he persuaded us however to spend time in his room now and then so they would not suspect his presence.*

*We made him aware that Colonel Campbell was known to have spent a night in that very inn, on his way to Toulon. He immediately resolved to adopt the name of Lord Burghers.*

*We sat down to dinner; but as it was not prepared by his cooks, he could not bring himself to take any nourishment, for fear of being poisoned. However, seeing us eat heartily, he was ashamed to let us see the misgivings that troubled him, and accepted everything offered him; he made a semblance of enjoying it, but sent back what he was given without touching it; sometimes he threw what he had accepted under the table, in order to make it appear as though he had eaten it. His dinner comprised a little bread and a flask of wine which he had brought from his carriage, and likewise shared with us.*

*He spoke a great deal, and was remarkably friendly. When we were alone, and the landlady who had served us had left, he gave us to understand how much he considered his life in danger; he was certain that the French Government had taken measures to seize him or assassinate him in that very place.*

*A thousand ideas crowded his mind of the manner in which he might save himself; he also thought of ways of fooling the people of Aix, since he had been warned that a very large crowd was waiting at the posting station. He then declared to us what seemed most appropriate to him, which was to return to Lyons, and take an alternative route from there to embark for Italy. We could not, under any circumstances, consent to this plan, and we sought to persuade him to go directly to Toulon or to travel via Digne to Fréjus. We tried to convince him that it was impossible for the French Government to have such perfidious intentions concerning him without us being aware of it, and that the people, despite the unpleasant way they behaved, were incapable of a crime of that nature.*

*In order the better to convince us, and prove to us how well-founded, according to him, his fears were, he told us what had passed between himself and the landlady, who did not know who he was. – “Well,” she had said, ‘have you come across Bonaparte?’ – “No,” he had replied. – “I am curious to see,” she continued, “if he can save himself; I keep thinking the people will kill him: and it must be admitted he certainly deserves it, that rascal! So, tell me, are they going to ship him to the island?” – “Yes indeed.” – “They’ll drown him, won’t they? – “I truly expect so!” Napoleon replied. “So you see,” he added, “to what dangers I am exposed.”*

*Then he began again to weary us with his anxieties and uncertainties. He even begged us to check whether there was a hidden door somewhere by which he might escape, or whether the window, whose shutters he had ordered fastened on arrival, was too high for him to jump down and so flee.*

*The window was barred outside, and I put him into an extreme agony by communicating this discovery to him. At the least noise he shuddered and changed color.*

*After dinner we left him to his reflections; and when, from time to time, we went into his room, according to the wish he had expressed, we found him constantly in tears...*

*The aide-de-camp General Shuvalov came to tell us that the people who had been crowding the street had almost all vanished. The Emperor decided to leave at midnight.*

*His exaggerated forebodings led him to take yet more measures to avoid being recognized.*

*On his own authority, he compelled General Shuvalov's aide-de-camp to dress himself in the blue frock coat and the round hat in which he himself had arrived at the inn.*

*Bonaparte, who now wished to make himself look like an Austrian general, put on General Koller's uniform, decorated himself with the Order of St. Theresa, which the General was entitled to wear, put my travelling helmet on his head, and wrapped himself in General Shuvalov's cloak.*

*After the Commissioners of the Allied Powers had thus equipped him, the carriages came forward; but before we descended, we rehearsed, in our room, the order in which we were to travel. General Drouot headed the procession; next came the supposed Emperor, General Shuvalov's aide-de-camp; then General Koller, the Emperor, General Shuvalov, and I, who had the honor of forming part of the rear-guard, to which the Emperor's suite attached itself.*

*In this way we drove through the silent crowd who were trying their hardest to discover him whom they called their tyrant among us.*

*Shuvalov's aide-de-camp (Major Oloviev) took Napoleon's place in the carriage, and Napoleon left with General Koller in his barouche...*

*However the Emperor was not re-assured; he remained in the Austrian general's barouche, and ordered the coachman to smoke, so that familiarity might add to the deception concerning his presence. He even asked General Koller to sing, and when he replied that he did not know how to sing, Bonaparte told him to whistle.*

*In this way he spent the journey, hidden in a corner of the barouche, feigning sleep, lulled by the General's pleasant music and bathed in the coachman's smoke.*

*At Saint-Maximin, he lunched with us. When he heard that the sub-prefect of Aix was present, he summoned him, and addressed him in these terms: "You should be ashamed to see me in an Austrian uniform; I have had to don it to protect myself from the insults of the people of your Provence. I would come among you with the greatest confidence, if I could have six thousands of my guardsmen with me. I find a crowd of extremists threatening my life. This race of Provence is a wicked one; they perpetrated all sorts of crimes and horrors during the Revolution and are ready, all of them, to begin again: but when it's a question of fighting courageously, then they are cowards. Provence never yielded me a single regiment to satisfy me. But they may perhaps set themselves against Louis XVIII tomorrow as they appear to have done today against me etc."*

*Then, turning towards us, he said that Louis XVIII would never do anything with the French nation if he treated it too gently. "And then," he continued, "it will be necessary for him to raise taxes considerably, and those measures will immediately attract the hatred of his subjects."*

*He told us that it was eighteen years since he had been in this part of the country, with several thousand men, to free two royalists who ought to have been hung for wearing the white cockade. "I saved them with the greatest difficulty from the hands of those extremists; and today," he continued, "these men are practicing the same excesses once more against any of them who refuse to wear the white cockade! Such are the vagaries of the French people!"*

*We learned that there were two squadrons of Austrian hussars at Luc; and at Napoleon's request we sent an order to their commander to wait for us there in order to escort the Emperor to Fréjus.'*

Here the Count von Waldburg's narrative ends: the recital makes sad reading. What! Could the Commissioners not provide better protection to him whom they had the honor to be answerable for? Who were they to adopt such superior airs with that same man? Bonaparte said, rightly, that if he had wished he could have been escorted by a section of his Guard. It seems only too evident that they were indifferent to his fate: they enjoyed his degradation; they consented obligingly to the demeaning measures that the victim requested for his own safety: it was so sweet to trample underfoot the destiny of one who had overcome the noblest leaders, to take revenge, by insult, on pride! Moreover the Commissioners found nothing to say, not one word of philosophical feeling, regarding such a change in fortune, to warn the man of his nothingness and the grandeur of God's judgement! In the Allied ranks, there were numerous former admirers of Napoleon: when one falls to one's knees before power, one is not entitled to exult at misfortune. Prussia, I admit, would have needed to make an effort of virtue to forget what it had suffered, she and her King and Queen; but that effort should have been made. Alas! Bonaparte was pitied by no one; every heart was cold towards him. The moment when he showed himself at his cruelest, was at Jaffa; at his most negligible, on the way to the Isle of Elba; in the first case, military necessity provides an excuse; in the second, the harshness of the foreign Commissioners influences the feelings of readers and lessens the impression of abasement.

The Provisional Government of France itself does not seem quite irreproachable to me: I reject Maubreuil's claims nevertheless; considering the terror Napoleon still inspired in his former servants, a fortuitous catastrophe might well have presented itself to them as a mere mischance.

One might choose to doubt the truth of the facts reported by Count von Waldburg, but General Koller confirms, in a continuation of Waldburg's *Itinerary*, part of his colleague's narration; for his part, General Shuvalov has assured me of the correctness of these events: his restrained words speaking louder than the expansive words of Waldburg. Finally Fabry's *Itinerary* is based on authentic French documents, furnished by eye-witnesses.

Now I have done justice to the Commissioners and the Allies, can one still recognize the world-conqueror in Waldburg's *Itinerary*? The hero reduced to disguises and tears, weeping, in a courier's jacket, in the depths of the back-room of an inn! Was it thus that Marius behaved among the ruins of Carthage, how Hannibal died in Bithynia, Caesar in the Senate House? How did Pompey disguise himself? He covered his head with his toga. He who had donned the purple sheltering beneath a white cockade, uttering the salute: 'Long live the King!' That King whose heir he had shot! The ruler of nations encouraging the humiliations that the Commissioners granted him in order to conceal himself more effectively, delighted that General Koller whistled for him, that a coachman blew smoke in his face, forcing General Shuvalov's aide-de-camp to play the part of the Emperor, while Bonaparte wore an Austrian colonel's uniform and

wrapped himself in a Russian general's cloak! One must love life cruelly: these immortals cannot consent to death.

Moreau said of Bonaparte: *'What characterizes him is his mendacity and his love of life. I will beat him and I will see him at my feet begging for mercy.'* Moreau thought in that way, unable to understand Bonaparte's nature; he fell into the same error as Lord Byron. At least, on St Helena, Napoleon, given grandeur by the Muses, though scarcely shown as noble in his difficulties with the English Governor, had only to support the weight of his greatness. In France, the evil he had perpetrated appeared personified to him by the widows and orphans, and obliged him to tremble at the hands of a few women.

All that is quite true; but Bonaparte should not be judged by the rules one applies to great geniuses, because he lacked magnanimity. There are men who have the ability to climb but not to descend. He, Napoleon, possessed both qualities: like the rebellious angel, he could reduce his incommensurable size to enclose it in a moderate space; his flexibility gave him the means of salvation and rebirth: with him all was not over when it seemed over. Changing his costume and manners at will, as accomplished in comedy as in tragedy, that actor knew how to appear natural in a slave's tunic as in the cloak of a king, in the role of Attalus, or in the role of Caesar. Wait a moment, and you will see, from the depths of his degradation, the dwarf raise once more Briareus' head; Asmodeus will emerge in a vast cloud of smoke from the bottle in which he is imprisoned. Napoleon valued life for what it could bring him; he had an instinct for what remained for him to depict; he only wanted the canvas he lacked to achieve his paintings.

Regarding Napoleon's fears, Walter Scott, lest unjust than the Commissioners, remarks frankly that the people's fury made a great impression on Bonaparte, that he shed tears, that he showed more weakness than his known courage would have suggested ; but he adds: *'The danger was of a particularly unpleasant kind and capable of intimidating those who were accustomed to the terror of the battlefield: the bravest soldier could shiver at the death of de Witt.'*

Napoleon was subject to that Revolutionary anguish in the same locations where he began his career in the Terror.

The Prussian general, interrupting his narrative once, feels himself obliged to reveal a weakness that the Emperor did not hide: Count von Waldburg may have mistaken the sufferings which Monsieur Ségur had been witness to during the Russian Campaign, for what he had seen: there Bonaparte, forced to dismount, would press his head against a cannon. In the count of infirmities of famous warriors, genuine history only includes the dagger which pierced Henri IV's heart, or the cannonball which carried off Turenne.

After his recital of Bonaparte's arrival at Fréjus, Walter Scott, lacking great scenes, falls back delightedly on his talent; he goes to the *House of Gossip*, as Madame de Sévigné would say; he talks about Napoleon's crossing to Elba, of the impression Bonaparte made on the English sailors, except Hinton, who could not hear the praise bestowed on the Emperor without murmuring the word *humbug*. When Napoleon disembarked, Hinton wished His Honor good health and better luck another time. Napoleon showed all the wretchedness and all the grandeur of Man.



## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 21

Louis XVIII at Compiègne – His entry into Paris – The Old Guard – An Irreparable Fault – The Declaration of Saint-Ouen – The Treaty of Paris – The Charter – Departure of the Allies

While Bonaparte, known to the whole world, fled France in a shower of curses, Louis XVIII, forgotten by all, left London under a cloud of white banners and garlands. Napoleon, landing on the Isle of Elba, recovered his strength. Louis XVIII, landing at Calais, might well have seen Louvel; he did meet General Maison, charged, sixteen years later, with escorting Charles X aboard at Cherbourg. Charles X, had given Monsieur Maison the baton of a Marshal of France, apparently to render him worthy of his future mission, just as a knight, before an encounter, would confer knighthood on a man of lesser rank with whom he deigned to cross swords.

I feared the effects of Louis XVIII's appearance. I hastened to arrive before him at that Royal residence where Joan of Arc fell into English hands and where they showed me a volume struck by one of the cannonballs fired at Bonaparte. What was one to think at the sight of the Royal invalid replacing the horseman, who might have said as Attila did: *'The grass no longer grows where my horse has passed?'* Without the taste for it, and without being asked, I undertook (having been cursed with it) somewhat of a difficult task, namely to depict *The Arrival at Compiègne*, to portray the descendant of Saint Louis such as I have idealized him with the aid of the *Muses*. I expressed myself thus:

*'The King's coach was preceded by Generals and Marshals of France, who had left before His Majesty. The cries of "Long live the King!" had given way to confused sounds in which nothing could be distinguished but the accents of joy and emotion. The King wore a blue coat, decorated only by a medal and epaulettes; his legs were encased in long boots of red velvet, edged with fine gold cord. When he was sitting in his armchair, with his old-style boots, holding his cane between his legs, one might have been looking at Louis XIV at fifty...*

*...Marshals Macdonald, Ney, Moncey, Sérurier, and Brune, and the Prince de Neuchâtel, all the generals, all the people present, received the most affectionate words from the King, without exception. Such is the power of the legitimate sovereign in France; that magic associated with the name of king. A man arrives alone from exile, despoiled of everything, without followers, without bodyguards, without wealth; he has nothing to give, almost nothing to promise. He descends from his carriage, leaning on the arm of a young woman; he shows himself to officers who have never seen him before, to grenadiers who scarcely know his name. Who is this man? It is the King! Everybody falls at his feet.'*

What I said therein about the military, for the purposes which I intended, was true as far as the leaders were concerned; but I lied in regard to the soldiers. I have present in memory, as if I saw it still, the spectacle I witnessed when Louis XVIII, entering Paris on the 3rd of May, went to visit Notre-Dame: they wished to spare the King the sight of foreign troops; so a regiment of the old Foot-guards lined the route from the Pont-Neuf to Notre-Dame, along the Quai des Orfèvres. I doubt that human faces ever wore so terrible and threatening an expression. Those battle-scarred grenadiers, the conquerors of Europe, who had seen so many thousands of cannonballs pass over their heads, who smelt of flame and powder; those same men, robbed of their leader, were obliged to salute an old king, disabled by time not war, watched as they were by an army of Russians, Austrians and Prussians, in Napoleon's occupied capital. Some,

wrinkling the skin of their foreheads, brought their great busbies down over their eyes so as not to see; others turned down the corners of their mouths in angry contempt; others again bared their teeth between their moustaches, like tigers. When they presented arms, it was with a furious movement, and the sound of those arms made one tremble. Never, it must be confessed, have men been put to so great a test or suffered such torment. If they had been called upon to exact vengeance at that moment, it would have been necessary to exterminate every last one of them, or they would have devoured the earth.

At the end of the line was a young hussar, on horseback; he held a naked sword, and made it leap and dance as it were with a convulsive movement of anger. He was pale; his eyes rolled in their sockets; he kept opening and closing his mouth, clashing his teeth, and stifling cries of which only the first sound could be heard. He caught sight of a Russian officer: the look he gave him cannot be described. When the King's carriage passed before him, he made his horse rear, and he must have been tempted to hurl himself at the King.

The Restoration, at its inception, committed an irreparable fault: it should have dismissed the army while retaining the marshals, generals, military governors, and officers, with their pensions, honors and rank; the soldiers could then have been re-admitted in succession to the reconstituted army, as they since have been into the Royal Guard: for one thing the Legitimacy would not have experienced the opposition of those soldiers of the Empire, organized, recruited into brigades, designated as they were in the days of their glory, chattering endlessly amongst themselves about the past, nourishing regrets and hostile feelings towards their new master.

The wretched resurrection of the Maison-Rouge, that mixture of military men of the old monarchy and soldiers of the new empire, added to the problem: to believe that the illustrious veterans of a thousand battlefields would not be shocked to see young men, brave doubtless, but for the most part new to the profession of arms, to see them wear, without having won them, the insignia of high military rank, would be to reveal ignorance of human nature.

During the stay Louis XVIII had made at Compiègne, Alexander came to visit him. Louis XVIII offended him by his vanity: the declaration of the 2nd of May, at Saint-Ouen was the result of that meeting. The King said: that he was resolved to grant as the basis of the constitution his intention to make his people the following guarantees: *representative government organized in two chambers, free consent to taxation, public and individual liberty, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, the inviolability and sacredness of property, the irrevocability of the sale of national possessions, responsible ministers, permanent judges with independent judicial power, all French people admissible for all positions, etc. etc.*

This declaration, though it suited Louis XVIII's temperament, nevertheless owed nothing to him or his councilors; it was quite simply the age waking from sleep: its wings had been furled, its flight suspended since 1792: it took its course through the air once more. The excesses of the Terror, the tyranny of Bonaparte, had stemmed the flow of ideas; but, as soon as the obstacles which thwarted them had been destroyed, they poured once more through the channel they were immediately obliged to follow and deepen. Things resumed from the point where they had halted; what was past was if it had not happened: human expectations, postponed at the start of the Revolution, had merely lost twenty years of life; now what is twenty years in the life of a society? That lacuna has vanished while the severed segments of time have been re-joined.

On the 30th of May 1814 the Treaty of Paris between France and the Allies was concluded. It was agreed that within two months the powers which had been engaged on one or other side during the recent war would send plenipotentiaries to Vienna to a general Congress to determine the final arrangements.

On the 4th of June, Louis XVIII appeared at a Royal session of the assembled members of the Legislature and a section of the Senate. He gave a fine speech; aged, faded, worn, these fastidious details only serve as a historical record.

The Charter, for the majority of the nation, had the disadvantage of being *granted*: which rekindled, by an unhelpful word, the burning question of whether it was to be a sovereign or a popular monarchy. Louis XVIII also dated his benefaction according to the year of his reign, treating Bonaparte as if he had not occurred, just as Charles II had played leapfrog with Cromwell: it acted as a kind of insult towards those sovereigns who had all recognized Napoleon, and who happened at the time to be in Paris. That outmoded language and those pretensions of the former monarchy added nothing to the rights of the Legitimacy and were merely puerile anachronisms. Other than the fact that the Charter in replacing despotism brought us legal freedom, it had done nothing to satisfy men of conscience. Nevertheless, the Royalists who won much advantage from it, emerging from their villages, or wretched hearths, or other obscure places where they had existed during the Empire, after being summoned to high public office, merely received the benefaction with mutterings; the liberals, who had cheerfully adjusted to Bonaparte's tyranny, considered the Charter a veritable code of slavery. We returned to the time of Babel; but we no longer worked on a public monument in the confusion: each built their tower to their own height, according to their strength and stature. Moreover, if the Charter seemed defective, it was because the Revolution was not yet at an end; the principle of equality and democracy was in people's minds and worked in a contrary direction to monarchical order.

The Allied princes did not wait to leave Paris: Alexander, before his departure had celebrated mass in the Place de la Concorde. An altar was raised on the spot where Louis XVI's scaffold had been erected. Seven Muscovite priests performed the rite, and the foreign troops filed in front of the altar. The *Te Deum* was sung to one of the lovely melodies of ancient Greek music. The soldiers and sovereigns knelt on the ground to receive the benediction. French thoughts returned to 1793 and 1794, when the oxen refused to cross pavements which the smell of blood rendered obnoxious to them. What hand had led these men from every country to this service of expiation, these descendants of the ancient barbarian incursions, these Tartars, some of whom had dwelt in sheepskin tents at the foot of the Great Wall of China? These are sights that the feeble generations who will follow my age will no longer witness.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 22

#### The first year of the Restoration

During the first year of the Restoration, I was present at a third transformation of society: I had seen the old monarchy turn into the constitutional monarchy and the latter into the Republic; I had seen the Republic become a military tyranny; I was now seeing military despotism reverting to a free monarchy, new ideas and new generations returning to old principles and old men. The Marshals of the Empire became Marshals of France; to the uniforms of Napoleon's Guard were added the uniforms of the Lifeguards and the Maison-Rouge, cut in precisely the former fashion; the old Duc d'Havré, with his powdered wig and his black cane, ambled along nodding his head, as Captain of the Lifeguards, beside Marshal Victor, limping in the Bonaparte manner; the Duc de Mouchy, who had never seen a cannonball fired, went to mass alongside Marshal Oudinot, who was riddled with wounds; the Palace of the Tuileries, so clean and militaristic under Napoleon, began to wreak everywhere with the odor of food, instead of the smell of powder: under the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, and the Officers of the Mouth and the Wardrobe, everything took on an air of domesticity again. In the streets, one saw decrepit emigrants with the manners and clothes of former times, highly respectable men no doubt, but as outlandish among the modern crowd as the Republican captains had looked among Napoleon's soldiers. The ladies of the Imperial Court introduced the dowagers of the Faubourg Saint-Germain to the palace, and taught them their way *around* the corridors. Deputations from Bordeaux arrived, wearing armbands; and captains from parishes of the Vendée wearing La Rochejacquelein hats. These diverse persons retained the habits of feeling, thought, dress and manners familiar to them. Liberty which was at the root of this epoch, made things co-exist which at first sight looked as though they should not exist at all; but it was difficult to recognize that liberty, since it wore the colors both of the ancient monarchy and imperial despotism. Everyone was untutored in the language of the *Constitution* also; the Royalists made gross errors when speaking of the *Charter*; the Imperialists were even less well-informed; the Members of the *Convention*, who had become in turn counts, barons, senators under Napoleon and peers under Louis XVIII, lapsed at one moment into the Republican jargon they had almost forgotten, at another into the absolutist idiom which they had learned by heart. Lieutenant-Colonels were promoted to become royal gamekeepers. Aides-de-camp of the former military tyrant were heard discussing the inviolable liberty of nations, while regicides upheld the sacred dogma of Legitimacy.

Such metamorphoses would be odious, if they did not belong in part to the flexibility of the French genius. The people of Athens governed themselves; orators appealed to their feelings in the public squares; the sovereign crowd was composed of sculptors, painters, and artisans, *observers of speeches and listeners to deeds*, as Thucydides says. But when a decree, good or bad, was delivered, who came forward from that incoherent and inexperienced mass to execute it? Socrates, Phocion, Pericles, Alcibiades.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 23

#### Were the Royalists to blame for the Restoration?

Were the Royalists *to blame for the Restoration*, as is claimed today? Not in the least: would that not imply that thirty million men stood by in consternation while a handful of Legitimists accomplished a detestable Restoration, against the will of all, by waving a few handkerchiefs and tying their wives' ribbons round their hats? It is true that the vast majority of Frenchmen were delighted; but that majority was not *Legitimist* in the narrow sense of the word, applicable only to devoted supporters of the former monarchy. The majority was a mass of people of every shade of opinion, happy to be delivered from tyranny, and violently incensed against the man they accused of all their misfortunes; hence the success of my pamphlet. How many avowed aristocrats were numbered among those proclaiming the King's name? Messieurs Matthieu and Adrien de Montmorency, the Messieurs de Polignac, released from gaol, Monsieur Alexis de Noailles, and Monsieur Sosthènes de La Rochefoucauld. Did these six, or perhaps there were eight men, whom the people neither knew nor followed, lay down the law to a whole nation?

Madame de Montcalm had sent me a purse containing twelve hundred francs to be distributed amongst the race of pure Legitimists: I sent it back to her, having been unable to place a single crown. A disreputable rope was slung around the neck of the statue surmounting the column on the Place Vendôme; there were so few Royalists to be found to jeer at glory and pull on the rope, that it was the authorities, Bonapartists to a man, who lowered their master's effigy with the aid of a derrick: the colossus was forced to bow his head: he fell at the feet of the sovereigns of Europe, who had so often prostrated themselves before him. It was men of the Republic and the Empire who welcomed the Restoration with enthusiasm. The conduct and ingratitude of those elevated by the Revolution towards him whom today they pretend to regret and admire was abominable.

Imperialists and Liberals, it is you into whose hands power fell, you who knelt before the descendants of Henri IV! It was perfectly natural that Royalists should be happy to recover their princes and see the end of the reign of him whom they considered a usurper; but not that you, creatures of that usurper, should surpass the Royalists in your excesses of feeling. The ministers and grand dignitaries swore loyalty to the Legitimacy at every opportunity; all the civil and judicial authorities queued to protest their hatred for the newly proscribed dynasty, and their love for the ancient race they had condemned a thousand times. Who drew up those proclamations, those insulting and accusatory addresses for Napoleon, with which France was flooded? Royalists? No: the ministers, generals, and officials, chosen and maintained by Bonaparte. Where was the corruption of the Restoration carried out? Among the Royalists? No: at Monsieur de Talleyrand's. With whom? With Monsieur de Pradt, chaplain to the *god Mars* and mitred mountebank. Where and with whom did the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom dine on his arrival? At a Royalist house with Royalists? No: at the Bishop of Autun's, with Monsieur de Caulaincourt. Where were receptions given for the *infamous foreign princes*? In Royalist palaces? No: at Malmaison, at the Empress Josephine's. To whom did Napoleon's dearest friends, Berthier for example, offer their ardent devotion? To the Legitimacy. Who spent their time with the autocratic Alexander, with that brutal Tartar? The Members of the Institute, the scholars, the men of letters, the philosophers of philanthropy, theophily, and so forth; they returned charmed, laden with praise and snuff-boxes. As for us, poor devils of Legitimists, we were admitted nowhere; we counted for nothing. Now, we were told in the street to go home to bed; now, we were recommended not to shout 'Long Live the King!' too loudly, others

being so charged. Far from forcing anyone to be a Legitimist, those in power declared that no one would be obliged to change their role or language, that the Bishop of Autun would no more be compelled to say Mass under the monarchy than he had been under the Empire. I saw no lady of the manor, no Joan of Arc proclaiming the rightful sovereign, falcon on wrist, or lance in hand; but Madame de Talleyrand, whom Bonaparte had pinned to her husband like a parchment, drove through the streets in a barouche, singing hymns about the pious family of the Bourbons. A few sheets hanging from the windows of the familiars of the Imperial Court made the simple Cossacks believe that there were as many *fleurs-de-lis* in the hearts of converted Bonapartists as there were white rags at their casements. Contagion is a marvelous thing in France, and a man would cry: ‘Off with my head!’ if he heard his neighbor shout it. The Imperialists went so far as to enter our houses and make us, the other Bourbonists, display such white scraps as our linen-rooms contained, by way of spotless flags: that’s what happened in my house; but Madame de Chateaubriand would have none of it, and defended her muslins valiantly.

## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 24

First Minister – I publish *Réflexions Politiques* – Madame la Duchesse de Duras –  
I am named as Ambassador to Sweden

The Legislative Body transformed into a Chamber of Deputies, and the Chamber of Peers, composed of a hundred and fifty-two members, appointed for life, among which were more than sixty senators, formed the two supreme legislative Chambers. Monsieur de Talleyrand, installed as Foreign Minister, left for the Congress of Vienna, whose opening was fixed for the 3rd of November, in fulfilment of article 32 of the treaty of the 30th of May; Monsieur de Jaucourt held his portfolio during the interim, until the Battle of Waterloo. The Abbé de Montesquiou became Minister of the Interior, with Monsieur Guizot as his secretary-general; Monsieur Malouët took the Navy; he died and was replaced by Monsieur Beugnot; General Dupont obtained the War Department; he was replaced by Marshal Soult, who distinguished himself by erecting a funeral monument at Quiberon; the Duc de Blacas was Minister for the King's Household, Monsieur Anglès Prefect of Police, Chancellor Dambray Minister of Justice, and Abbé Louis Minister of Finance.

On the 21st of October, the Abbé de Montesquiou presented the first law on the subject of the Press; it required all writings of less than twenty printed sheets to be submitted to censure: Monsieur Guizot drafted this first law of liberty.

Carnot sent a letter to the King: he confessed that the Bourbons *had been welcomed with joy*; but, without taking account of the short time elapsed, nor all that the Charter granted, he gave a haughty lecture mingled with dangerous advice: valueless from one who was forced to accept the rank of *Minister* and title of *Count* of the Empire; it is not appropriate to show pride towards a weak and liberal prince when one has been subject to a prince who was violent and despotic; when, an instrument of the Terror, one has been found to be inadequate in calculating the dimensions of Napoleonic warfare. In reply I published the *Réflexions Politiques*; they contained the substance of *Monarchie selon la Charte*. Monsieur Lainé, President of the Chamber of Deputies, spoke in praise of the work to the King. The King was always delighted with the services I had the good fortune to render him; the heavens seemed to have placed on my shoulders the insignia of herald to the Legitimacy: but the more success the work achieved, the less the author pleased His Majesty. The *Réflexions Politiques* disclosed my constitutional doctrines: the Court received the impression from it that my loyalty to the Bourbons could be weakened. Louis XVIII said to his followers: '*Take care never to admit a poet to our counsels: he will lose us everything. Such people are good for nothing.*'

A strong and lively friendship then filled my heart: the Duchesse de Duras had imagination and something of Madame de Staël's expression of countenance: one can assess her talent as an author by *Ourika*. Returning from emigration, retiring for several years to her chateau d'Ussé, on the banks of the Loire, it was in the lovely gardens of Méréville that I heard her speak for the first time, after having passed her in London without meeting her. She came to Paris to educate her delightful daughters, Félicie and Clara. Connections with her family, her province, and her literary and political opinions had opened the door to her society. Her warmth of heart, nobility of character, elevation of mind, and generosity of feeling made her a superior woman. At the commencement of the Restoration, she took me under her wing, since, despite what I had done for the legitimate monarchy and the services Louis XVIII confessed

to having received from me, I had been ignored to the extent that I thought of retiring to Switzerland. Perhaps I would have been better to do so: would I not have been happier in those solitudes that Napoleon had destined me for, as his ambassador to the mountains, than in the Palace of the Tuileries? When I entered those chambers on the return of the Legitimacy, they made almost as painful an impression on me as the day when I saw Bonaparte there, preparing to murder the Duc d'Enghien. Madame de Duras spoke about me to Monsieur de Blacas. He replied that I was quite free to go where I wished. Madame de Duras was so forceful, she had such courage on behalf of her friends, that they dug up a vacant embassy for me, that of Sweden. Louis XVIII, already weary of my name, was happy to make a present of me to his dear brother King Bernadotte. Did the latter not realize that they were sending me to Stockholm to dethrone him? Good Heavens! Princes of the earth, I dethrone nobody; keep your crowns, if you can, and above all do not give them to me, since *I want naught of them*.

Madame de Duras, that excellent woman who allowed me to call her sister, whom I had the happiness to see again in Paris over several years, has died at Nice: a re-opened wound yet. The Duchesse de Duras knew Madame de Staël well: I cannot understand why I was not drawn into the path of Madame Récamier, who had returned from Italy to France; I would have welcomed the help that has come to aid my life: already I belong no more to those days which are their own consolation, I have reached those twilight hours which have need of being consoled.



## BOOK XXII

### CHAPTER 25

The exhumation of the remains of Louis XVI – My first 21st of January at Saint-Denis

On the 30th of December 1814, the Legislative Chambers were adjourned until the 1st of May 1815, as if they had been summoned to Bonaparte's ceremony on the Champ-de-Mai. On the 18th of January the remains of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI were exhumed. I was present at that exhumation in the cemetery where Fontaine and Percier have since raised, at the pious command of Madame la Dauphine and in imitation of a sepulchral chapel at Rimini, perhaps the most remarkable monument in Paris. This church, formed of linked mausoleums, seizes the imagination and fills it with sadness. In Book IV of these *Memoirs*, I spoke of the exhumations of 1815: among the bones I recognized the queen's skull from the smile that head had bestowed on me at Versailles.

On the 21st of January the first stone of the plinth was laid for the statue which ought to have been raised in the Place Louis XV, and which has not yet been raised. I have written about the funeral ceremony on the 21st of January; I said: *'Those monks, who carried the Oriflamme before Saint Louis' reliquary, will not receive the sacred King's descendant. In those subterranean places where those vanished kings and princes slept, Louis XVI will find himself alone! ... How can so many dead have risen? Why is Saint-Denis deserted? Let us ask rather why its roof has been restored, why its altar is standing? Whose hand reconstructed the arches of these cellars, and prepared these empty tombs? It was the hand of that very man who sat on the throne of the Bourbons. O Providence! He thought he was preparing sepulchers for his race, and he was merely building a tomb for Louis XVI.'*

I had long desired a statue of Louis XVI to be placed on the very site where the martyr shed his blood: I am no longer of that opinion. One must praise the Bourbons for having thought of Louis XVI, at the first moment of their return; they had to bow to his remains, before placing the crown on their head. Now I presume they do not feel obliged to do anything more. There was no Commission in Paris, as in London, to try the King, the whole Convention did so; from that stems the annual reproach that a repeated funeral ceremony would seem to represent with respect to the nation, displayed in the form of a mass gathering. Every people has appointed anniversaries for the celebration of its triumphs, its disturbances or its misfortunes, for all equally have wished to preserve the memory of such things; we have had solemnities for the barricades, hymns for St Bartholomew's Day, festivals for the death of Capet; but is it not remarkable that the law is powerless to create days of remembrance, while religion has kept the most obscure saints alive from age to age? If the fasts and prayers instituted for Charles I's martyrdom still endure, that is because in England the State unites supremacy in religion to supremacy in politics, and in virtue of that supremacy the 30th of January 1649 has become a public holiday. In France, there is nothing of that sort: Rome alone has the right to command in matters of religion; consequently, what power does some ordinance published by a prince have, some decree promulgated by a political assembly, if another prince, another assembly, has the power to efface it? So now I consider that a symbol of a remembrance that might be abolished, that a testament to a tragic event, not consecrated by religion, would not be appropriately sited in a thoroughfare crowded with people going carelessly and distractedly about their pleasures. At the present time, it is indeed to be feared that a monument raised with the aim of advertising the horrors of popular excess might give the populace the desire to imitate it: evil is more tempting than good; in wishing to perpetuate grief, one often perpetuates the precedent. The centuries do

not espouse a legacy of mourning; there are enough contemporary subjects for weeping without needing to turn to hereditary tears.

Watching the catafalque, containing the remains of the king and queen, leaving Desclozeaux's cemetery, I felt stricken; I followed it with my eyes with a fatal presentiment. At last Louis XVI would rest at Saint-Denis; Louis XVIII, for his part, slept at the Louvre, the two brothers together began a new era of kings and legitimate spectres: idle this restoration of thrones and tombs whose twin power time had already swept aside.

Since I am speaking of funeral ceremonies which so often recur, I will tell you of the nightmare which oppressed me, when, the ceremony over, I walked at night in the half-obscurd basilica: that I might think of the vanity of human greatness among those destroyed tombs, that goes without saying: an everyday observation flowing indeed from that sight; but my mind did not stop there; I looked into the nature of man. Is it all emptiness and absence in the realm of sepulchers? Is there nothing in that nothing? Is there no being from nothingness, no thought from the dust? Do those remains have some mode of existence we know nothing of? Who knows the passions, the delights, the embraces of the dead? The things they dreamed of, believed, waited for, are they like them ideal entities, swallowed pell-mell with them? Dreams, prospects, joy, grief, freedom and slavery, power and weakness, crime and virtue, honor and infamy, wealth and poverty, talent, genius, intellect, glory, illusions, love, are you perceptions of an instant, perceptions lost with the shattered skull in which you were engendered, with the vanished breast where a heart once beat? In your eternal silence, O tombs, if you are tombs, is there only an eternal mocking laughter to be heard? Is that laughter God, the sole ironic reality, which will survive the imposture of this world? Let us close our eyes; let us fill the despairing abyss of existence with those great and mysterious words of the martyr: *'I am a Christian.'*

BOOK XXII  
CHAPTER 26  
The Island of Elba

Bonaparte had refused to embark in a French ship, only setting store at that time by the English Navy, because it was victorious; he had forgotten his hatred, the slanders, the insults which he had heaped on perfidious Albion; he saw no one worthy of his admiration save the winning party, and it was the *Undaunted* which took him to the place of his first exile; he was not without anxiety as to the manner in which he would be received: would the French Garrison hand the territory they guarded over to him? Of the Italian islanders, some wanted to bring in the English, others to remain free of all masters; the tricolor and the white banner waved on opposing headlands. Nevertheless everything was arranged satisfactorily. When they realized that Bonaparte was bringing millions of francs with him, public opinion decided generously to welcome the 'august victim'. The civil and religious authorities were brought round to the same conviction. Joseph-Philippe Arrighi, the Vicar-General, issued a pastoral letter: '*Divine Providence*,' the pious injunction read, '*has decreed that in future we shall be the subjects of Napoleon the Great. The Isle of Elba, elevated to so sublime an honor, receives the Lord's Anointed in its bosom. We order a solemn Te Deum to be sung by way of thanksgiving etc.*'

The Emperor had written to General Dalesme, the commander of the French garrison, to say that he should let the people of Elba know that *he had chosen* their island for his stay, because of the gentleness of their manners and their climate. He landed at Porto-Ferraio, to the sound of a double salute, from the English frigate which had brought him and from the batteries on shore. From there, he was conducted beneath the parish canopy to the church where the *Te Deum* was sung. The beadle, as master of ceremonies, was a short, fat man, who was unable to clasp his hands across his body. Napoleon was then taken to the town hall; there his lodgings had been prepared. The new Imperial standard was unfurled: a white ground crossed by a red stripe powdered with three gold bees. Three violins and two basses followed him with lively scraping sounds. The throne, hastily erected in the public ballroom, was decorated with gold paper and scarlet rags. These arrangements appealed to the theatrical side of the prisoner's nature: Napoleon played along, just as he used to amuse his Court with old-fashioned games in his palace at the Tuileries, before going off to kill men as a pastime. He ordered his household: it was composed of four chamberlains, three orderlies, and two stewards. He declared that ladies would be received twice a week, at eight in the evening. He gave a ball. He commandeered, as his own residence, a building intended for the engineer corps. Bonaparte was forever encountering in his life the two sources from which it had sprung, democracy and royal power; his strength was derived from the masses, his rank from his genius; that is why he passed effortlessly from the market-place to the throne, from the kings and queens who crowded round him at Erfurt, to the grocers and bakers who danced in his barn at Porto-Ferraio. Among princes he was of the people, and among the people, a prince. At five in the morning, in silk stockings and shoes with buckles, he presided over his bricklayers on the Isle of Elba.

Installed in his empire, its iron workings producing an inexhaustible flow since Virgil's day – '*Insula inexhaustis Chalybum generosa metallis*' – [*Aeneid* X:174. '*Island generous in those inexhaustible metals the Chalybes forge.*']

Bonaparte had not forgotten the insults to which he had recently been subjected; he had not renounced his intention of ripping away his shroud; but it suited him to seem as if buried, while making a few ghostly

visitations round his grave. That is why, looking as though he thought of nothing else, he lost no time in visiting his iron quarries, with their crystalline and magnetic ore; one might have taken him for the former Inspector of Mines of his erstwhile States. He regretted having previously dedicated the revenue of the Elban forges to the Legion of Honor: five hundred thousand francs now seemed to him worth more than the blood-stained crosses on his grenadiers' chests. *'What was I thinking of?'* he said; *'though I issued several stupid decrees of that sort.'* He concluded a commercial treaty with Leghorn, and proposed to conclude another with Genoa. He began to build, somewhat haphazardly, five or six furlongs of highroad and planned the sites of four large towns, just as Dido marked out the limits of Carthage. A philosopher, sated with human grandeur, he declared that henceforth he intended to live like a Justice of the Peace in an English county: and yet, climbing a hill which overlooked Porto-Ferrajo, in sight of the sea which lapped against the foot of the cliffs on every side, these words escaped him: *'Devil take it! It must be confessed, my island is very small.'* Within a few hours, he had visited his whole domain; he wished to join to it a rock named Pianosa. *'Europe,'* he said with a smile, *'will accuse me of already achieving a conquest.'* The Allied Powers amused themselves at the thought of having left him, derisively, four hundred soldiers; he needed no more to bring all of them back to the flag.

Napoleon's presence off the coast of Italy, which had seen the dawn of his glory and retained his memory, troubled everyone. Murat was his neighbor; his friends, and strangers, came secretly or publicly to his retreat; his mother and his sister, Princess Pauline, visited him; Marie-Louise and his son were expected to arrive soon after. In fact a woman did appear with a child: welcomed with great secrecy, she went to a secluded villa in the remotest corner of the isle: on the shore of Ogygia, Calypso spoke of her love to Ulysses who, instead of listening, thought about how to defend himself against the usurpers. After two days' rest, the Swan of the North took to sea once more, to land among the myrtles of Baiae, taking her little one away in her white yawl.

If we had been less trustful it would have been easy for us to recognize the approaching catastrophe. Bonaparte was too near his cradle and his conquests; his fatal island was to be further away and surrounded by the deep. It is hard to explain why the Allies had thought of banishing Napoleon to these rocks, where he was forced to serve his apprenticeship in exile: did they really believe that in sight of the Apennines, smelling the powder of the battlefields of Montenotte, Arcola and Marengo, able to make out Venice, Rome and Naples, his three lovely slaves, his heart would not be seized by irresistible temptation? Had they forgotten he had troubled the earth, and that he had admirers and debtors everywhere, all of them his accomplices? His ambition had been disappointed not extinguished; misfortune and revenge rekindled its flames: when the Prince of Darkness looked on Man and the World from the edge of the newly created universe, he resolved to destroy them.

Before the break-out, the dreaded captive contained himself for a few weeks. In the immense public game of faro whose bank he held, his genius played for a fortune or a kingdom. Fouché's, and Guzman d'Alfarache, swarmed around. The great actor had long ago created a melodrama for his police force and reserved for himself the finest scene; he diverted himself with common victims who vanished through the trap doors of his theatre.

*Bonapartism*, in the first year of *the Restoration*, passed for a simple desire for action, to the extent that his hopes grew and he better understood the feeble nature of the Bourbons. When the plans had been finalized externally, they were finalized internally, and the conspiracy became overt. During the skillful

administration of Monsieur Ferrand, Monsieur de Lavalette undertook the correspondence: the couriers of the monarchy carried the dispatches of the Empire. The matter was no longer hidden; caricatures depicted the wished-for return: one saw eagles shown returning through the windows of the Tuileries Palace, from the doors of which a flock of turkeys fled; the *Nain Jaune or Vert* (The Yellow or Green Dwarf) spoke of '*plumes de cane*' (duck-feathers, a pun on Cannes). Warnings flooded in from all directions, and no one wanted to believe them. The Swiss Government hastened in vain to warn the Royal Government of the plotting of Joseph Bonaparte, who had retired to the Canton of Vaud. A woman who had arrived from Elba gave the most circumstantial details of what was happening in Porto-Ferrajo, and the police threw her in prison. It was held for certain that Napoleon would dare attempt nothing before the dissolution of the Congress, and that, in any case, his sights were set on Italy. Others, yet more knowing, prayed that *the little corporal*, the *ogre*, the *prisoner*, would land on the French coast: that would be too fortunate; he could be finished off with a single blow! Monsieur Pozzo di Borgo declared in Vienna that the *delinquent* would be hung from the branch of a tree. If one had access to certain papers, one would find proof there that from 1814 a military conspiracy was under way that ran parallel to the political conspiracy that the Prince de Talleyrand was conducting in Vienna, at Fouché's instigation. Napoleon's friends had written to tell him that if he did not hasten to return, he would find his place at the Tuileries taken by the Duc d'Orléans: they imagined that this revelation would serve to initiate the Emperor's return. I believe these intrigues existed, but I also believe that the determining cause which made Napoleon decide the question was quite simply the nature of his genius.

The conspiracy of Drouet d'Erlon and Lefebvre-Desnouettes came to fruition. Some days before the raising of shields by these generals, I was dining at Marshal Soult's, he having been made Minister of War on the 3rd of December 1814: some idiot was recounting Louis XVIII's exile at Hartwell; the Marshal listened; as each circumstance was recalled he replied with these two words: '*That's historic.*' – Someone brought His Majesty's slippers. – '*That's historic!*' – The King, on days of abstinence, swallowed three fresh eggs at the start of dinner. – '*That's historic!*' The reply struck me. When a government is not firmly established, everyone with whom conscience does not count becomes, according to his greater or lesser energy of character, a quarter, a half, or three quarters a conspirator; he waits for the judgement of fate: events are greater traitors than opinions.

## End of Book XXII

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 1

#### The Commencement of The Hundred Days – The return from Elba

Suddenly the telegraph announced to the soldiers and an incredulous world that the man had disembarked: Monsieur hastened to Lyons with the Duc d'Orléans and Marshal Macdonald; he quickly returned. Marshal Soult, denounced in the Chamber of Deputies, surrendered his office on the 11th of March to the Duc de Feltre. Bonaparte found the general facing him, as Minister of War under Louis XVIII in 1815, who had acted as his last Minister of War in 1814.

The boldness of the enterprise was incredible. From the political viewpoint, it can be regarded as Napoleon's unpardonable crime and his capital error. He knew that the Princes, still gathered at the Congress, and Europe still under arms, would not permit his return to power; his judgement should have warned him that success, if he obtained it, could not last more than a moment: to his longing to reappear on the world's stage, he was sacrificing the peace of a nation which had lavished on him its blood and wealth; he was exposing to dismemberment that country from which he had derived everything he had been in the past, and all he might be in the future. In this fantastic undertaking there was a ferocious egoism, and a terrible lack of gratitude and generosity towards France.

All this is true according to practical reason, for a man of heart rather than brain; but for beings of Napoleon's sort, another kind of reason exists; those creatures of great renown have a way of their own: comets describe tracks which escape precise calculation; they are tied to nothing and seem purposeless; if a sphere appears in their path, they shatter it and vanish into the abyss of the sky; their tracks are known to God alone. Extraordinary individuals are monuments to human intellect; they are not its rule.

Bonaparte, then, was persuaded to his enterprise by the false reports of his friends, rather than his genius being driven to it by necessity: he took up the cross by virtue of the faith within him. For a great man, being born is not everything: he must also die. Was exile on Elba a fitting end for Napoleon? Could he accept the sovereignty of a villa, like Tiberius on Capri, or of a cabbage-patch, like Diocletian at Salona? Would he have had greater chance of success if he had waited until his memory aroused less emotion, his soldiers had left the army, and new social attitudes had been adopted?

Well, he took the world head-on! And, at the beginning, must have believed he had not deceived himself as to the extent of his power.

On the night of the 25th and 26th of February 1815, at the end of a ball at which the Princess Borghèse did the honors, he escaped with success, long his comrade and accomplice; he crossed a sea covered with our ships, meeting two frigates, a vessel of seventy-four guns and the brig Zephyr, which stopped him and interrogated him; he replied to the captain's questions himself; the sea and the waves saluted him and he pursued his course. The deck of the Inconstant, his little brig, served him as a study and an exercise-yard; he dictated amongst the breezes, and had copies made, on that table, of three proclamations to the army and France; a few feluccas, carrying his companions in fortune, accompanied his flagship, flying a white flag sprinkled with stars. On the 1st of March, at three in the morning, he landed on the coast of France, between Cannes and Antibes, at Golfe-Juan: he landed, strolled along the shore, picked some violets, and bivouacked in an olive-grove. The population, stupefied, concealed themselves. He avoided Antibes, and plunged into the mountains of Grasse, passing through Sernon, Barrême, Digne and Gap. At Sisteron

twenty men could have stopped him, and he encountered nobody. He advanced without opposition from the inhabitants who a few months earlier had wanted to cut his throat. When handfuls of soldiers entered the void which formed around his giant shadow, they were seduced irresistibly by the sight of his eagles. His enemies, spellbound, searched for him and failed to find him; he hid himself in his glory, as the lion of the Sahara clothes himself in the sun's rays to divert the gaze of dazzled hunters. Clothed in a fiery whirlwind, the blood-stained phantoms of Arcola, Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland, Eylau, Borodino, Lützen and Bautzen, provided an escort for him of a million dead. From the heart of this column of fire and smoke, there issued, at the entrance to every town a few trumpet blasts accompanied by the brandishing of the tricolor standards: and the gates of the town fell. When Napoleon crossed the Niemen at the head of four hundred thousand infantry and a hundred thousand cavalry, to blow up the palace of the Tsars in Moscow, it was less astonishing than when, breaking his ban, and hurling his chains in the faces of kings, he travelled alone, from Cannes to Paris, to sleep peacefully in the Tuileries.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 2

The Legitimacy in a state of torpor – Benjamin Constant's article – Marshal Soult's order of the day – A Royal session – The Petition of the Law School to the Chamber of Deputies

Alongside this astonishing invasion by a single individual, one must set another, a repercussion of the first: the Legitimacy was seized by stupor; the paralysis at the heart of the State spread through its limbs and rendered France immobile. For twenty days, Bonaparte advanced stage by stage; his eagles flew from steeple to steeple, and throughout his journey of six hundred miles, the Government, master of all, with money and labor at its disposal, had neither the time nor the means to blow a bridge, or fell a tree, to delay for even an hour the advance of this man whom the population chose not to oppose, but whom they no longer followed.

This torpor on the part of the Government seemed so much the more deplorable in that public opinion in Paris was extremely confused; it was open to any suggestion, despite Marshal Ney's defection. Benjamin Constant wrote in the newspaper:

*'Having scourged our nation, he left French soil. Who did not believe he had left forever? Suddenly he appears again, promising the French liberty, victory and peace. The author of the most tyrannical constitution ever to bind France, does he now speak of liberty? Yet he is the one who, for fourteen years, has eroded and destroyed liberty. He has not the justification of lineage, the customary excuse of power; he was not born to the purple. He has enslaved his fellow citizens, enchained his equals. He did not inherit power; he desired and meditated tyranny: what liberty can he promise? Are we not a thousand times freer than under his Empire? He promises victory, and has abandoned his troops three times, in Egypt, Spain, and Russia, leaving his companions in arms to the triple agonies of cold, misery and despair. He has brought on France the humiliation of being invaded; he has lost the conquests we made prior to him. He promises peace yet his mere name is a signal for war. The nation so unfortunate as to serve him would become an object of hatred to all Europe; his triumph would be the beginning of mortal combat against the whole civilized world... He has nothing to re-claim or to offer. Who could he convince, who could he sway? Internal strife, external war, those are the gifts he brings us.'*

Marshal Soult's order of the day, dated the 8th of March 1815, followed Benjamin Constant's ideas closely, in an outburst of loyalty:

*'Soldiers,*

*That man who recently abdicated, in the sight of all Europe, the power he had usurped, which he had used so fatefully, has landed on French soil which he should never have seen again.*

*What does he desire? Civil war: what does he seek? Traitors: where will he find them? Shall it be among those soldiers he has deceived and sacrificed so many times, wasting their bravery? Shall it be in the bosoms of those families whom his name alone fills with fear?*

*Bonaparte despises us enough to believe that we will desert our legitimate and beloved sovereign, to share the fate of a man who is no better than an adventurer. He believes it, the madman! And his last foolish act is to make it known.*



*Soldiers, the French army is the bravest in Europe, it will also be the most loyal.*

*Let us rally to the banner of the fleur-de-lis, to the voice of the father of the nation, of that worthy heir to the virtues of the great Henry. He himself decreed for you the duties which you have to fulfil. He places at your head that prince, a model of French knighthood, whose happy return to our country has already driven out the usurper, and who now by his presence will destroy the usurper's sole and final hope.'*

Louis XVIII appeared before the Chamber of Deputies on the 16th of March; it was a question of France and the world. When His Majesty entered, the Deputies and spectators in the gallery bared their heads and stood; their acclamations made the walls of the room shake. Louis XVIII climbed slowly to the throne; the Princes, Marshals and Captains of the Guard ranged themselves on either side of the King. The cries ceased; all were silent: in that hush, it was as though Napoleon's distant tread could be heard. His Majesty, seated, looked at the assembly for a moment and uttered this speech in a firm voice:

*'Gentlemen,*

*'At this moment of crisis, when a public enemy has penetrated one region of my kingdom and threatens the liberty of all the rest, I come amongst you to tighten further the bonds which, by uniting you and I, create the strength of the State; I come to address you and reveal my feelings and wishes to all France.*

*I have seen my country once more; I have achieved her reconciliation with the foreign powers, who, be in no doubt, will stay faithful to the treaties which have brought us peace; I have labored for the happiness of my people; I have received, I do receive, every day the most touching marks of their affection; could I end my career more gloriously, at sixty years of age, than by dying in her defence?*

*I fear nothing now as regards myself, but I fear for France: he who comes to light the torch of civil war amongst us carries also the scourge of foreign war; he comes to set our country once more beneath his iron yoke; he comes to destroy finally the Constitutional Charter I have granted you, that Charter, which will be my finest title in the eyes of posterity, that Charter which every French person cherishes and which I swear now to maintain: let us rally round it then.'*

The King was still speaking when a cloud deepened the gloom in the chamber; all eyes turned to the ceiling to discover the reason for this sudden darkness. When the monarch and legislator ceased to speak, cries of: *'Long live the King!'* rose again in the midst of tears. *'The Assembly,'* reported the *Moniteur* accurately, *'electrified by the King's sublime speech, were standing, hands outstretched towards the throne. Nothing could be heard but the words; 'Long Live the King! Our lives for the King! The King: in life and death!'* repeated in a delirium that all French hearts shared.'

Indeed, the spectacle was filled with pathos: an old infirm King, who, as a reward for the massacre of his family and twenty-three years of exile, had brought France peace, liberty, and an amnesty for all the insults and all the misfortunes; this patriarch of sovereigns came to tell the nation's Deputies that at his age, having seen his country once more, he could find no finer end to his career than dying in defence of his people! The Princes swore loyalty to the Charter; the belated pledges were terminated by those of the Prince de Condé and the adherence of the father of the Duc d'Enghien. That heroic race about to be extinguished, that race of patrician swords, seeking in liberty a shield against a younger, longer and crueler plebeian sword, offered, in the light of a multitude of memories, something sad in the extreme.

Louis XVIII's speech, once known beyond those walls, inspired inexpressible transports of joy. Paris was wholly Royalist, and remained so during the Hundred Days. Women in particular supported the Bourbons.

The young today adore Bonaparte's memory, because they are humiliated by the role the present Government forces France to play in Europe; youth, in 1814, welcomed the Restoration, because it felled tyranny and elevated liberty. In the ranks of the Royalist cause were to be found Monsieur Odilon Barrot, a large number of the students of the School of Medicine, and the whole of the Law School; the latter addressed the following petition to the Chamber of Deputies on the 13th of March:

*'Gentlemen,*

*'We offer ourselves for King and country; the whole Law School asks permission to march. We will not abandon our sovereign, or our Constitution. Loyal to French honor, we ask you for weapons. The feeling of affection we have towards Louis XVIII matches yours in constancy and devotion. We desire no more chains, we desire liberty. We will have it: they come to tear it from us: we will defend it to the death. Long live the King! Long live the Constitution!'*

In this energetic language, natural and sincere, you can feel the generosity of youth and its love of liberty. Those who tell us today that the Restoration was received by France with sadness and disgust are either ambitious individuals promoting their party, or young men who knew nothing of Bonaparte's oppression, or old revolutionary and Imperialist liars who, having applauded the return of the Bourbons with everyone else, now insult, according to their custom, whatever has fallen, and return instinctively to assassination, a police state, and servitude.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 3

#### A plan for the defence of Paris

The King's speech filled me with hope. Discussions were held at the residence of the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Monsieur Lainé. I met Monsieur de Lafayette there: I had only seen him at a distance in another epoch, that of the Constituent Assembly. The proposals varied; for the most part they were spineless, as happens when danger looms: some wanted the King to quit Paris and retire to Le Havre; others spoke of conveying him to the Vendée; this group here spewed out words without reaching a conclusion, that over there said we must wait and see what happens: yet what was happening was extremely apparent. I expressed a contrary opinion: a singular thing, Monsieur de Lafayette supported me, and warmly! (Monsieur de Lafayette confirms, in his Memoirs, precise as to facts, published since his death, the singular agreement of his opinion and mine concerning Bonaparte's return. Monsieur de Lafayette sincerely loves honor and freedom. Note: Paris, 1840) Monsieur Lainé and Marshal Marmont were also of my opinion. I spoke thus:

*'Let the King keep his word; let him stay in the capital. The National Guard support us. Let us secure Vincennes. We have money and weapons: with money we command the weak and greedy. If the King leaves Paris, Paris will allow Bonaparte to enter; Bonaparte as master of Paris is master of France. The army has not gone over en masse to the enemy; several regiments, many generals and officers, have not yet betrayed their oath: let us stand firm, and they will remain loyal. Let us disperse the Royal family, only protecting the King. Let MONSIEUR go to Le Havre, the Duc de Berry to Lille, the Duc de Bourbon to the Vendée, the Duc d'Orléans to Metz; Madame la Duchesse and Monsieur le Duc d'Angoulême are already in the Midi. Our various points of resistance will prevent Bonaparte from concentrating his forces. Let us barricade ourselves within Paris. The National Guards of neighboring departments are already coming to our aid. In the midst of this activity, our aged monarch, protected by Louis XVI's last will and testament, with the Charter in his hand, will rest easy seated on his throne in the Tuileries; the Diplomatic Corps can range themselves around him; the two Chambers can meet in the two pavilions of the château; the King's household can camp on the Carrousel and in the Tuileries Garden. We will line the quays and the riverside terrace with cannon: let Bonaparte attack us in that scenario; let him assault our barricades one by one; let him bombard Paris if he wishes and if he has the guns; let him render himself obnoxious to the whole population, and we shall see the result of his enterprise! If we can hold out for only three days, victory is ours. The King, by defending himself in his own palace, will arouse universal enthusiasm. Finally, if he must perish, let him die in a manner worthy of his rank let Napoleon's last exploit be the slaughter of an old man. Louis XVIII, by sacrificing his life, would have won the only battle he shall have fought; he would win it to benefit the liberty of the human race.'*

So I spoke: one is never welcomed for saying all is lost when nothing has yet been tried. What would have been finer than an ancient son of Saint Louis overcoming with the French, in a few moments, a man whom all the kings conjured from Europe spent so many years trying to defeat?

This suggestion, apparently born out of desperation, was in fact quite realistic and offered not the least risk. I will always remain convinced that Bonaparte, finding Paris opposed to him, and the king in residence, would not have attempted to take it by force. Without artillery, without supplies, without money, he had with him only an army collected by chance, still in disorder, astounded at their sudden

change of cockade, their oaths of loyalty sworn in flight on the highways: they would have been swiftly scattered. A few hours delayed and Napoleon would have been lost; it only required a little courage. At that time we could even count on sections of the army; the two Swiss regiments kept faith: did not Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr re-adopt the white cockade in the Orléans garrison two days after Bonaparte entered Paris? From Marseilles to Bordeaux, everyone recognized the King's authority throughout the whole of March: at Bordeaux the troops wavered; they would have remained loyal to the Duchesse d'Angoulême, if the King had been known to be at the Tuileries and Paris defending itself. The provincial towns would have followed Paris's lead. The Tenth Regiment of the Line fought well under the Duc de Angoulême; Masséna revealed himself as cautious and undecided; at Lille, the garrison responded to a lively proclamation by Marshal Mortier. If all this evidence of potential loyalty existed despite the possibility of the King's flight, what might there not have been in the event of resistance?

If my plan had been adopted, there would have been no new foreign invasion of France; our Princes would not have returned with the enemy armies; the Legitimacy would have saved itself. There would have been one thing only to fear after that success: too great a confidence on the part of Royalty in armed force, and in consequence attempts to limit our national rights.

Why was I born to an epoch to which I was so badly suited? Why was I a Royalist against my instincts at a time when the wretched race at Court neither listened to nor understood me? Why was I thrown amongst that crowd of mediocrities who treated me like an idiot, when I spoke of courage; as a revolutionary if I spoke of freedom?

It was merely a question of self-defense! The king had nothing to fear, and my plan pleased him sufficiently by the grandeur, *à la Louis XIV* somewhat, that it possessed; but other faces lengthened. The diamonds from the royal coronet were packed away (acquired in the past with the sovereigns' private funds), leaving thirty-three million crowns in the treasury and forty-two millions of personal effects. These seventy-five millions were the fruits of taxation: they should have been returned to the people rather than left to the tyrant!

A dual procession mounted and descended the stairs of the Pavillon de Flore; people asked what was to be done: there was no reply. The Captain of the Guards was asked; the chaplains, cantors, and priests were interrogated: nothing: idle chatter, idle projects, and an idle flow of news. I have seen young men weep in fury over their vain requests for orders and weapons; I have seen women taken ill in their anger and contempt. Approach the King, impossible; etiquette sealed the door.

The grand measure decreed to counter Bonaparte was an order *to charge* (*courir sus*): Louis XVIII, with deficient limbs, *to charge* a conqueror over-striding the earth! That formula of the ancient law, revived for this occasion, suffices to reveal the mental capacity of the officers of State at that time. To *charge* in 1815! *Charge! Against* what: *against* a wolf, *against* a brigand chief, *against* an errant Lord? No: *against* Napoleon who had himself *charged* kings, captured them, and branded them on the shoulder forever with his ineffaceable N!

In this decree, when considered more closely, a political truth which no one has observed is revealed: the legitimate race, strangers to the nation for twenty-three years had remained in the hour and place where the Revolution had left them, while the nation had advanced through time and space. From that arose the impossibility of them understanding or re-joining it; religion, ideas, interests, language, heaven and earth,

all were different for people and King, because they were no longer at the same point on the road, because they were separated by a quarter of a century, equivalent to many centuries.

But if the order *to charge* appears strange in its retention of an ancient legal phrase, had Bonaparte the intention initially to act in any more effective a way, even though he was employing a new manner of speech? The papers of Monsieur de Hauterive, catalogued by Monsieur Artaud, prove that it took a great deal of effort to prevent Napoleon from having the Duc d'Angoulême shot, despite what the official statement in the *Moniteur* said, a statement issued and left behind for show: he found it unacceptable that the prince stood up for himself. And yet the fugitive from Elba, in leaving Fontainebleau, had recommended that his soldiers should be *loyal to the monarch* of France had chosen. At the moment when Napoleon again spoke of killing a son of France, was he anything more than the dual usurper of the new Bourbon monarchy and popular liberty? What! Was the Duc d'Enghien's blood insufficient for him? Bonaparte's family had been respected; Queen Hortense had obtained the title of the Duchesse de Saint-Leu from Louis XVIII; Caroline, who still reigned in Naples, had merely had her kingdom traded by Monsieur de Talleyrand during the Congress of Vienna.

That epoch, where everyone lacked openness, seared the heart: everyone threw a profession of loyalty before them, like a footbridge over the difficulties of the hour; even if it meant changing direction, the difficulty was traversed: only youth was sincere, because it retained traces of the cradle. Bonaparte solemnly declares that he renounces the crown; he leaves and returns after nine months. Benjamin Constant publishes his vigorous protest against the tyrant, and changes his mind within twenty-four hours. Later you will discover, in a further book of these *Memoirs*, who it was inspired him to this noble action, to which the changeability of his nature did not allow him to remain faithful. Marshal Soult stirs the troops against their former leader; a few days later he roars with laughter at his proclamation in Napoleon's study at the Tuileries, and becomes Major-General of the Army of Waterloo; Marshal Ney kisses the King's hand, swears to bring him Bonaparte in an iron cage, and then hands over to Bonaparte all the corps he commands. Alas! And the King of France....He declares that at sixty he can embrace no better end to his career than dying in defence of his people...and then goes off to Ghent! At this lack of truthfulness in the expression of feeling, at this discord between words and actions, one was seized with disgust at the human species.

Louis XVIII, on the 20th of March, intended to die at the heart of France; if he had kept his word, the Legitimacy might have endured for a century; nature even seemed to have robbed the aged king of the means of retreat, by saddling him with infirm health; but the future destiny of the human race would have been hindered if the author of the Charter had accomplished his resolution. Bonaparte hastened to the aid of the future; that Christ of evil powers took this latest paralytic by the hand, and said to him: 'Take up thy bed and go; surge, tolle lectum tuum.'

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 4

The flight of the King – I leave with Madame de Chateaubriand – Problems on the way – The Duc d'Orléans and the Prince de Condé – Tournai, Brussels – Memories – The Duc de Richelieu – The King halts at Ghent and summons me

It was evident that they were about to decamp: due to the fear of being detained, they did not even warn those who, like me, might have been shot an hour after Bonaparte entered Paris. I met the Duc de Richelieu on the Champs Elysees: *'They are deceiving us,'* he said to me; *'I am mounting guard here, since I do not intend to wait for the Emperor alone in the Tuileries.'*

Madame de Chateaubriand had sent a servant to the Carrousel on the evening of the 19th, with orders not to return unless he was certain of the King's flight. At midnight, the servant not having returned, I went off to bed. I was just getting ready for sleep, when Monsieur Clausel de Coussergues entered. He told us that His Majesty had left and was heading for Lille. He brought me this news on behalf of the Chancellor, who knowing I was in danger, violated security on my behalf and brought me twelve thousand francs, due to me on my appointment as Minister for Sweden. I insisted on staying, not wishing to leave Paris until I was absolutely sure of the Royal move. The servant sent to discover it, returned: he had seen the carriages file out of the courtyard. Madame de Chateaubriand pushed me into her carriage at four in the morning on the 20th of March. I was in such a fit of rage I knew neither where I was going nor what I was doing.

We left by the Barrière Saint-Martin. At dawn, I watched the crows, descending peacefully from the elms by the highway where they had spent the night, about to breakfast in the fields, without bothering about Louis XVIII or Napoleon: they were not, those crows, obliged to leave their country, and thanks to their wings, they scorned the dreadful road I was jolting over. Old friends from Combourg! We were more akin when long ago at daybreak we dined on blackberries among the dense thickets of Brittany!

The road had broken up, the weather was wet, and Madame de Chateaubriand felt ill: she looked constantly through the window at the rear of the vehicle to see if we were being pursued. We slept at Amiens, where Du Cange was born; then at Arras, Robespierre's home city: there, I was recognized. Having dispatched a request for horses, on the morning of the 22nd, the post-master said they had been commandeered by a general who was carrying news to Lille of *the Emperor's triumphant entry into Paris*; Madame de Chateaubriand was dying of fear, not for herself, but for me. I hastened to the stables and, with money, removed the difficulty.

Arriving beneath the ramparts of Lille on the 23rd, at two in the morning, we found the gates closed; the order was not to open them to anybody. They could not or would not say if the King had entered the city. I engaged a coachman for a few louis, to take us to the other side of the city via the exterior of the glacis, and then conduct us to Tournai; in 1792, I had taken this same road, at night, on foot, with my brother. Reaching Tournai, I learnt that Louis XVIII had definitely entered Lille with Marshal Mortier, and that he counted on defending it. I sent a courier to Monsieur Blacas, begging him to send me a permit allowing me to enter the city. My courier returned with a permit from the commandant but no word from Monsieur Blacas. I was setting out in a carriage to return to Lille, leaving Madame de Chateaubriand at Tournai, when the Prince de Condé arrived. We learnt from him that the King had left and that Marshal Mortier

had provided an escort for him to the border. After this explanation, it was obvious that Louis XVIII had not been at Lille when my letter arrived there.

The Duc d'Orléans soon followed the Prince de Condé. Appearing discontented, he was content at heart to find he was out of the fight; the ambiguity of his declaration of support for the Charter and his conduct bore the imprint of his nature. As for the aged Prince de Condé, the Emigration remained his fixed point. He was not afraid of Monsieur de Bonaparte; he would fight if they wished, he would leave if they wished: things were a little confused in his brain; he did not know if he was stopping at Rocroi to give battle, or to go and dine at the Grand-Cerf. He struck camp a few hours before us, telling me to recommend the innkeeper's coffee to those of his household whom he had left behind. He did not know I had handed in my resignation on the death of his grandson; he only felt about that name a certain halo of glory which may as well have clung to some Condé whom he did not recall.

Do you remember my first passing through Tournai with my brother, during my first emigration? Do you remember, regarding it, the man changed into a donkey, the girl from whose ears sprang ears of corn, the cloud of rooks that spread fire everywhere? In 1815, we were like that cloud of rooks ourselves, except that we spread no fires. Alas! I was no longer accompanied by my unfortunate brother! Between 1792 and 1815, the Republic and the Empire had vanished: what revolutions had taken place in my life also! Time had ravaged me along with all the rest. And you, the younger generations of this age, let twenty-three years go by, and you will ask at my grave where all your present passions and illusions are.

The Bertin brothers had arrived at Tournai: Monsieur Bertin de Vaux returned to Paris; the other Bertin, the elder Bertin, was my friend. You will know from the fifteenth book of these *Memoirs* what attracted me to him.

From Tournai we travelled to Brussels: there I found no Baron de Breteuil, no Rivarol, nor all those young aides-de-camps, now dead or grown old which are the same thing. There was no sign of the barber who had given me refuge. I carried a pen and not a musket; I had turned from soldiering to scribbling on paper. I located Louis XVIII; he was in Ghent, where Messieurs Blacas and de Duras had escorted him: their intention at first had been to have the King embark for England. If the King had consented to that project, he would never have recovered the throne.

Entering a boarding house to look at a room, I found the Duc de Richelieu, smoking while reclining on a sofa, in the depths of a darkened chamber. He spoke of the Princes in a coarse manner, declaring that he was off to Russia, and wanted to hear no more of that lot. Madame the Duchesse de Duras, who had arrived in Brussels had the grief of her mother dying there.

The capital of Brabant is hateful to me; it has never served me for anything but a route to exile; it has always brought me, or my friends, trouble.

An order from the King summoned me to Ghent. The Royal volunteers and the Duc de Berry's tiny army had been sent away to Béthune, to the mud and mess of a military debacle: there had been moving farewells. Two hundred men of the King's household remained and were confined to Alost; my two nephews, Louis and Christian de Chateaubriand, were part of that corps.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 5

THE HUNDRED DAYS IN GHENT – The King and his council – I become interim Minister of the Interieur – Monsieur de Lallay-Tollendal – Madame the Duchesse de Duras – Marshal Victor – The Abbé Louis and Comte Beugnot – The Abbé Montesquiou – Dining on white fish: guests

I was given a billet which I did not take advantage of: a Baroness whose name I forget sought out Madame de Chateaubriand at the inn and offered us a room at her house: she begged us to accept it with such good grace! *‘Pay no attention,’* she said, *‘to what my husband tells you: he has a problem with his mind...you understand? My daughter is also a bit strange; she has terrible fits, poor child! But the rest of the time she is gentle as a lamb. Alas! It is not she who causes me the most grief it is my son Louis, the youngest of my children: if God does not help him, he will be worse than his father.’* Madame de Chateaubriand refused politely to go and live among such reasonable people.

The King, comfortably lodged, having his servants and his guards around him, formed his council. The empire of this great monarch comprised a palace of the Kingdom of the Low Countries, which palace was situated in a city which, though it was the city that saw Charles V’s birth, had been the headquarters of one of Bonaparte’s prefectures: those two names between them covered a good number of events and centuries.

The Abbé de Montesquiou being in London, Louis XVIII named me as Minister of the Interior for *the interim*. My correspondence with the regions did not require much effort; I kept my correspondence with the prefects, sub-prefects, mayors and deputies of the fine towns within our frontiers up to date quite easily; I did not repair many roads and I let the church-towers crumble; my budget scarcely increased my wealth; I had no private funds; only, by a glaring abuse, *I drew concurrent salaries*; I was still Minister plenipotentiary of His Majesty to the King of Sweden, who, like his compatriot, Henri IV, reigned by right of conquest, rather than by right of birth. We spoke round a table covered with green velvet in the King’s study. Monsieur de Lally-Tollendal who was, I think, Minister for Public Instruction, gave extensive speeches, with more flesh on them than his person: he cited his illustrious ancestors the Kings of Ireland and muddled his father’s trial with those of Charles I and Louis XVI. At night he recovered from the tears, sweat and speeches he had poured out in council, with a lady who had hastened from Paris carried along by enthusiasm for his genius; he sought virtuously to cure her of her disease, but his eloquence triumphed over his virtue and only drove the poison deeper.

Madame the Duchesse de Duras came to rejoin Monsieur the Duc de Duras among the exiles. I will speak no more of the evils of adversity, since I spent three months with this excellent woman, conversing of all that minds and true hearts can find in an agreement of tastes, ideas, principles and feelings. Madame de Duras was ambitious for me: she alone knew from the start what value I might have politically; she was continually disappointed by the envy and blindness that distanced me from the King’s Council; but she was yet more disappointed by the obstacles that my character placed in the way of my fortunes: she scolded me, she wanted to cure me of my casual attitude, my frankness, my naivety, and make me adopt the methods of the courtiers, which she herself could not stand. Nothing perhaps serves more to cement attachment and gratitude than to feel yourself under the patronage of a superior friendship, which by virtue of its social influence, makes your faults pass for qualities, your imperfections for charms. A man



assists you for what it is worth to him, a woman because of what you are worth: which is why of the two empires the first is so hateful, the second so sweet.

Since I lost that most generous individual, of so noble a soul, a mind which united something of the powers of intellect of Madame de Staël with the grace of Madame de Lafayette's talent, I have not ceased, while weeping, to reproach myself for the changeability with which I may have occasionally distressed those hearts devoted to me. Let us have particular regard to character! Let us consider that we can, despite a profound relationship, nevertheless poison days that we would buy back at the cost of all our blood. When our friends have descended into the grave, what means have we of repairing our mistakes? Are our useless regrets, our vain repentance a remedy for the pain we have given them? They would have loved a smile from us while they were alive more than all our tears for them after their death.

The delightful Clara (Madame the Duchesse de Rauzan) was in Ghent with her mother. Between us, we made terrible couplets to the air of *La Tyrolienne*. I have held on my lap plenty of pretty little girls who are young grandmothers today. When you leave a woman behind you, married before you at sixteen, and you return sixteen years later, you will find she is still the same age: '*Ah, Madame, you have not aged a day!*' Doubtless: but you say that to the young girl, to the young girl you again lead to the altar. But you, sad witness of her two marriages, you close away the sixteen years you have received at each union: wedding gifts which will hasten your own marriage to a pale lady, a little on the thin side.

Marshal Victor came to stand with us, at Ghent, with admirable straightforwardness: he asked for nothing, never bothered the King by being over-eager; one scarcely saw him; I do not know if he was ever accorded the honor and grace of even a single invitation to dine with His Majesty. I subsequently met Marshal Victor; I have been his colleague at the Ministry, and always the same excellent character was on view. In Paris, in 1823, Monsieur le Dauphin was extremely harsh towards this honest soldier: a fine thing: that this Duke of Belluno should receive, in return for his humble devotion, such thoughtless ingratitude! Ingenuousness attracts me and moves me, even though on certain occasions it appears ultimately as an expression of naivety. Thus the Marshal told me of the death of his wife in the language of a soldier, and made me cry: he pronounced coarse words so hastily, and edited them with so much modesty, that one even had to smile at them.

Monsieur de Vaublanc and Monsieur Capelle, rejoined us. The former told us he had a bit of everything in his satchel. Do you want some Montesquieu? He's here: some Bossuet? Here he is. As soon as the assembly seemed to wish for another face, travellers arrived for us.

The Abbé Louis and Monsieur the Comte Beugnot stayed at the inn where I was lodging. Madame de Chateaubriand had dreadful fits of breathlessness, and I stayed up to watch over her. The two new arrivals installed themselves in a room which was only separated from my wife's by a thin partition; it was impossible not to hear, unless one stopped one's ears: between eleven and midnight the occupants raised their voices; the Abbé Louis who spoke wolfishly, and jerkily, said to Monsieur Beugnot: '*You, a Minister? You won't be one any longer! You've perpetrated nothing but idiocies!*' I could not hear Monsieur the Comte Beugnot's reply clearly, but he spoke of thirty-three millions left behind in the Royal Treasury. The Abbé pushed a chair over, apparently in anger. Despite the crash, I grasped these words: '*The Duc de Angoulême? He must buy the National assets at the gate of Paris. I will sell the rest of the State forests. I will fell them all, the elms along the highway, the woods of Boulogne, the Champs-Élysées: what use are they? Hey!*' Monsieur Louis' brutality was his principal merit; his talent was a stupid love of

material interests. If the Finance Minister drew the forests after him, he doubtless possessed a different secret to that of Orpheus, *who made the woods follow him by his beautiful music*. In the jargon of the time, Monsieur Louis was described as a *specialist*; his financial specialty had led him to pile up taxpayers' money in the Treasury, to have it seized by Bonaparte. Good for the Directory at the most, Napoleon had no need of this specialist, who was not at all unique.

The Abbé Louis had come to Ghent to reclaim his Ministry; he was very close to Monsieur de Talleyrand, with whom he had officiated solemnly at the First Federation on the Champ-de-Mars: the Bishop served as priest, the Abbé Louis as deacon, and the Abbé Desrenaudes as sub-deacon. Monsieur de Talleyrand, remembering that amazing profanation, said to Baron Louis: '*Abbé, you were a very fine deacon on the Champ-de-Mars!*' We endured that shame under Bonaparte's grand tyranny: had we to endure it again?

The *Very-Christian* King was protected from all reproach of that kind: he had a married bishop on his Council, Monsieur de Talleyrand; a priest with a concubine, Monsieur Louis; an Abbé who scarcely practiced his religion, Monsieur de Montesquiou.

The latter, a man as feverish as a consumptive, with a certain facility in speaking, had a narrow mind adept at denigration, a heart full of hatred, an embittered nature. One day when I had spoken out in favor of the freedom of the press, the descendant of Clovis, passing in front of me, who only derived from the Breton Mormoran, gave me a shove in the leg with his knee, which was not in good taste; I returned it, which was impolite: we played at being the Coadjutor and the Duc de La Rochefoucauld. The Abbé de Montesquiou amusingly called Monsieur de Lally-Tollendal '*a creature after the English manner*'.

In the rivers around Ghent, they angled for a very delicate white fish: we would eat, *tutti quanti* (all and sundry) these fine fish in the restaurant, waiting for the battles which end empires. Monsieur Laborie was always present at the rendezvous: I had met him for the first time at Savigny, when, fleeing from Bonaparte, he entered by way of one of Madame de Beaumont's windows, and exited through another. Tireless in his efforts, proliferating errands and notes, as pleased at rendering a service as others are at receiving them, he has been slandered: the essence of slander is not the accusation of having been slandered but the slanderer's reasons. I showed weariness with the promises in which Monsieur Laborie was wealthy; but why? *Dreams are like torments: they always pass an hour or two*. I have often taken in hand, with a golden bridle, vicious old memories which could no longer stand upright, which I had taken for young and dashing hopes.

I also saw Monsieur Mounier at the white-fish dinners, a man of reason and probity. Monsieur Guizot too deigned to honor us with his presence.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 6

#### THE HUNDRED DAYS IN GHENT, CONTINUED – The Ghent Moniteur – My report to the King: the effect of that report in Paris – Falsification

A *Moniteur* was established in Ghent: my *report* to the King of the 12th of May, inserted in this paper, show that my sentiments regarding the freedom of the press and regarding foreign domination have been identical at all times and in all places. I can cite these passages today; they do not contradict my record in any way:

*‘Sire, you should begin to set a crown on the institutions whose foundations you have laid...You have specified a date for the commencement of hereditary peerages; the Government should have acquired greater unity; the Ministers should have become members of the two Chambers, according to the true spirit of the Charter; a law should have been proposed whereby one could be elected as a member of the Chamber of Deputies at under forty years of age and citizens could enjoy a genuine political career. Work was going to start on a legal code covering press offences, after the adoption of which the press would have been entirely free, since that freedom is inseparable from representative government...’*

*Sire, this is the moment to register a solemn protest: all your Ministers, all the members of your council, are indissolubly attached to wise principles of freedom; they draw from their proximity to you that love of law, order, and justice, without which there is no happiness for a nation. Sire, may we be permitted to say to you, we are ready to shed our last drop of blood for you, to follow you to the ends of the earth, to share with you the tribulations which it may please the Almighty to send you, because we believe before God that you will maintain the constitution you have granted to your people, that the sincerest wish of your royal spirit is the liberty of the French. If it had been otherwise, Sire, we would always have died at your feet in the defence of your sacred person; but we would merely have been your soldiers, we would have ceased to be your councilors and ministers...*

*Sire, at this moment we share your Royal grief; there is not one of your councilors and ministers who would not give his life to prevent the invasion of France. Sire, you are French, we are French! Sensitive to the honor of our country, proud of the glory of our arms, admirers of our soldiers’ courage, we would wish, at the heart of their battalions, to shed our last drop of blood to show them their duty or to share with them the triumphs of the Legitimacy. We cannot view without the most profound sorrow the evils that are ready to fall upon our country.’*

Thus, at Ghent, I proposed to give the Charter what it still lacked, and I showed my sorrow at the new invasion which threatened France: I was as yet only an exile whose hopes lacked the events which could re-open the gates of my country to me. Those pages were written in a State belonging to a royal ally; among princes and *émigrés* who detested the freedom of the Press; and in the midst of armies marching to conquest of whom we were, so to speak, prisoners: those circumstances added some power perhaps to the sentiments I dared to express.

My report, arriving in Paris, caused a great stir; it was reprinted by Monsieur Le Normant the younger, who risked his life on that occasion, and for whom I took all the trouble in the world to obtain a fruitless patent as printer to the King. Bonaparte acted or sanctioned action, in a manner barely worthy of him: when my report appeared they did as the Directory had done on the appearance of Cléry’s *Memoirs*, they

doctored the piece: I was supposed to have suggested to Louis XVIII inanities regarding the restoration of feudal rights, church tithes, and the return of national assets, as if the original publication in the Ghent Moniteur, at a precise and known date, did not contradict this imposture; but they needed a timely deception. The pseudonymous author charged with this dishonest pamphlet was a military man of reasonably high rank: he was destitute after the Hundred Days; his destitution was accounted for by his conduct towards me; he sent his friends to me; they begged me to intervene in order that a worthy man should not lose his only means of existence: I wrote to the Minister of War, and obtained a retirement pension for the officer. He is dead: the officer's wife remained devoted to Madame de Chateaubriand with a gratitude which I was far from entitled to. Certain things are over-valued; the most ordinary of people are susceptible to these acts of generosity. A reputation is granted to stale virtue: the superior soul is not that which forgives; it is that which has no need of forgiveness.

I am not sure why Bonaparte decided, on St Helena, that *I had rendered a vital service at Ghent*: if he assessed my role too favorably, at least he felt some appreciation of my political worth.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 7

THE HUNDRED DAYS IN GHENT, CONTINUED – The Beguinage – How I was received – A grand dinner – Madame de Chateaubriand's trip to Ostend – My life's echoes – Anvers – A Stammerer – Death of a young English girl

In Ghent, I avoided as much as I could, those intrigues antipathetic to my nature and wretched to witness; since, at heart, in our petty disaster I perceived social disaster. My refuge, among the idlers and wastrels, was the *Beguinage Close*: I wandered around this little world of women, veiled or wimpled, devoted to various Christian works; a region of calm sited, like *the African Syrtes*, at the edge of the storms. There, nothing disparate jarred my thoughts, since the religious atmosphere is so elevated, that it is never alien to the most serious resolutions: the solitaries of the *Thebaïd* and those Barbarians who destroyed the Roman world were not in fact discordant or mutually exclusive.

I was received graciously in that Close as the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme*; everywhere I go, among Christians, priests come to meet me; then the mothers bring their children; the latter recite my chapter on *First Communion*. Then unfortunates present themselves who tell me the good I have been happy enough to bring them. My passage through a Catholic town is announced like that of the missionary and the doctor. I am moved by this dual reputation: it is the only pleasant memory of self that I preserve; the rest of my personality and my fame displease me.

I was frequently invited to dinners with the family of *Monsieur and Madame d'Ops*, a venerable father and mother surrounded by thirty or so children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. At *Mr. Coppens'* house, a gala dinner, which I was prevailed upon to attend, lasted from one in the afternoon to eight in the evening. I counted nine courses: they began with preserves and ended with mutton chops. Only the French know how to dine to a plan, as they are the only ones who know how to structure a book.

My *Ministry* kept me in Ghent; *Madame de Chateaubriand*, less pre-occupied, went off to visit *Ostend*, where I had embarked for Jersey in 1792. I had sailed down those same canals, exiled and at death's door, that I walked now, still an exile, though in perfect health: always these echoes in my life! The sorrows and joys of my first emigration wakened in my thoughts; I saw England once more, my companions in misfortune, and Charlotte whom I was obliged to view again. No one is as guilty as I am of creating a real world by evoking shadows; it works in such a way that my remembered life takes on the feel of my present life. Even people I have never been involved with, when they die, invade my memory: one might almost say that no one can be my companion until they have entered the grave, which leads me to me believe I am myself one with the dead. Where others find eternal separation, I find eternal reunion; let one of my friends leave this earth, and it is as if he comes to stay with me; he leaves me no more. As the present world fades, the past world returns to me. If the current generations scorn the older generations, their contempt loses its force, in regard to me: I do not even perceive their existence.

My insignia of the *Golden Fleece* was not yet at *Bruges*, Madame de Chateaubriand could not bring it to me. At Bruges in 1426, there was a man *whose name was John*, who invented or perfected oil painting: let us give thanks to *Jan van Eyck* of Bruges; without the adoption of his method, Raphael's masterpieces would have faded by now. Where did the Flemish painters steal the *light* which illuminates their paintings? What ray of Greek sunlight strayed to the shores of Batavia?

After her trip to Ostend, Madame de Chateaubriand set out for Anvers. In a cemetery there, she saw souls in Purgatory done in plaster daubed with soot and flames. At Louvain she recruited a gentleman who stammered at me, a knowledgeable professor who came to Ghent expressly to see so extraordinary a man as my wife's husband. He addressed me: 'Illus...ttt...rr...' his speech detracted from his admiration, and I asked him to dine. When the Hellenist had drunk some curaçao, his tongue was freed. We started on the merits of Thucydides, whom the wine rendered clear as crystal to us. In order to contend with my guest, I ended up, I believe, talking Dutch; at least I no longer understood what I was saying.

Madame de Chateaubriand endured a sad night in the inn at Anvers: a young English girl, who had just given birth, died; for two hours she uttered her moans; then her voice grew weak, and her last groan, which scarcely reached the stranger's ear died into eternal silence. The cries of that traveller, lonely and deserted, seemed a prelude to the thousand dying voices about to call out at Waterloo.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 8

#### THE HUNDRED DAYS IN GHENT, CONTINUED – Unusual activity at Ghent – The Duke of Wellington – Monsieur – Louis XVIII

The usual quietness of Ghent was made more apparent by the crowd of foreigners who now animated it, and who rose early. Belgian and English recruits took their exercise in the squares and under the trees of the walkways; gunners, supply-merchants, and dragoons landed artillery trains, herds of oxen, and horses that struggled in the air while they were lowered suspended in strapping; camp-followers unloaded their sacks, their children and their husbands' rifles: all were heading, without knowing why and without the least interest in it, for the vast rendezvous of destruction that Bonaparte would provide for them. Along the canals, politicians could be seen gesticulating, near to some motionless fisherman, and *émigrés* trotting along from the King's residence to Monsieur's, from Monsieur's to the King's. The Chancellor of France, Monsieur D'Ambray, in a green coat, and a round hat, with an old novel under his arm, was off to the council to amend the Charter; the Duc de Lévis went to pay his court in old cut-away slippers, which his feet emerged from, because, like a brave modern *Achilles*, he had been wounded in the heel. He was full of wit, which one can see from his collection of maxims.

The Duke of Wellington visited from time to time to review the troops. After dinner each day, Louis XVIII went out in a coach and six with the First Gentleman of the Bedchamber and his Guards, to make the tour of Ghent, just as if he had been in Paris. If he met the Duke of Wellington on the way, he gave him a little nod of the head in patronage.

Louis XVIII never forgot his pre-eminence in the cradle; he was King everywhere, as God is God everywhere, in the nursery or the temple, at an altar of gold or of clay. He never made a single concession to misfortune; his pride grew with his abasement; his name was his crown; he had the air of saying: '*Kill me, but you cannot kill the centuries written on my brow.*' If they had chiseled away at his coat of arms on the Louvre what did it matter; were they not engraved on the globe? Had Commissioners been sent to all corners of the world to efface them? Had they been erased in India, at Pondicherry, in the Americas, at Lima and in Mexico; in the East, at Antioch, Jerusalem, Acre, Cairo, Constantinople, Rhodes, and in the Morea; in the West, on the walls of Rome, on the ceilings of the Caserta and the Escorial, in the vaulting of spaces at Ratisbon and Westminster, in the escutcheons of all the kings? Had they scored them from the compass point, where they appear to announce the reign of the *fleur-de-lis* over scattered regions of the earth?

The obsession Louis XVIII acquired, with grandeur, antiquity, dignity, and the majesty of his race, provided Louis XVIII with a veritable empire. One felt his dominance; even Bonaparte's generals confessed to it: they felt more intimidated before this powerless old man than before the terrible master who had commanded them in a hundred battles. In Paris, when Louis XVIII granted the triumphant monarchs the honor of dining at his table, he passed without question as the first of those Princes whose soldiers were camped in the courtyard of the Louvre; he treated them like vassals who were only doing their duty in leading their troops into the presence of their sovereign lord. In Europe, there was only one monarchy, that of France; the fate of the other monarchies was bound to the destiny of hers. All the royal lines were once linked to the race of Hugh Capet, and almost all are junior branches. Our ancient royal

power was the ancient royalty of the world: from the banishment of the Capetians will date the era of the expulsion of Kings.

The more impolitic this pride of Saint Louis' descendant (it became fatal in his heirs) the more it fueled National pride: the French delight in seeing sovereigns who, conquered, carry their chains like men, in order to wear, as conquerors, the yoke of the race.

Louis XVIII's unshakeable faith in his rank was the real power which granted him the scepter; it is that faith, which, twice remembered, set a crown on his head regarding which Europe had not expected, and had not intended to exhaust its people and its wealth. The exile without an army was still there, after all those battles which he himself had not waged. Louis XVIII was the Legitimacy incarnate; it ceased to be visible once he had vanished.



## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 9

THE HUNDRED DAYS IN GHENT, CONTINUED – Historical memories in Ghent – Madame the Duchesse d'Angouleme arrives in Ghent – Monsieur de Sèze – Madame the Duchesse de Lévis

I took solitary walks in Ghent, as I do everywhere. The small boats slipped down the narrow canals, forced to traverse thirty or forty miles of meadows to reach the sea, as if they were sailing over the grass; they reminded me of the canals in the savage swamps among the wild grains of Missouri. Halting at the edge of the water, as the patches of white canvas sank below the skyline, my eyes wandered to the city steeples; history appeared in the clouds of the sky.

The inhabitants of Ghent rise against Henri de Châtillon, the French Governor; the wife of Edward III brings John of Gaunt into the world, root of the House of Lancaster; Artevelde exercises popular rule: *'Good people, who is attacking you? Why are you so unhappy with me? How have I angered you? – You must die!'* shout the people: it is what the age always shouts at us. Then later I see the Dukes of Burgundy; the Spaniards arrive: then come the pacification, the sieges, and the taking of Ghent.

When I had dreamt my way through the centuries, the sound of a bugle or Scottish bagpipes woke me. I saw live soldiers hastening to rejoin their battalions buried deeper in Batavia: always destruction, power brought down; and, in the end, vanishing shades and past names.

Maritime Flanders was one of the first areas occupied by the companions of Clodion and Clovis. Ghent, Bruges, and their surrounding countryside provided almost a tenth of the grenadiers of the Old Guard: that feared militia was drawn in part from the cradle of our forefathers, and it ended up being wiped out near to that cradle. Has not the Lys given its flower to our Kings' armies?

Spanish style has left its imprint: the buildings in Ghent conjured for me those of Granada, lacking the skies of the Vega. A great city, almost without inhabitants, deserted streets, canals as deserted as the streets...twenty six islands created by canals, which are not those of Venice, an enormous artillery piece from the middle ages, these are what, in Ghent, replace the city of the Zegris, the Darro and the Xenil, the Generalife and the Alhambra: my old dreams, shall I never see you again?

Madame the Duchesse d'Angoulême, embarking in the Gironde, reached us via England with General Donnadieu and Monsieur de Sèze, who had crossed the sea, his blue ribbon outside his coat. The Duke and Duchess of Lévis had followed the Princess: they threw themselves into the stagecoach and fled Paris by the Bordeaux road. The travellers and their companions talked politics: *'That rascal, Chateaubriand,'* said one of them, *'is no fool! For three days, his carriage sat there, loaded up, in the courtyard: the bird has flown. It wouldn't have been a bad thing if Napoleon had caught him!'*

Madame the Duchess of Lévis was a very beautiful, very fine person, as calm in spirit as Madame the Duchess de Duras was agitated. She never left Madame de Chateaubriand's side; she was our assiduous companion in Ghent. No one has brought more peace to my life, something which I need greatly. The least troubled moments of my life are those I spent at Noisiel, at the home of that lady whose words and feelings only entered one's soul to bring it serenity. I remember them with regret, those moments spent beneath the great chestnut-trees of Noisier! My mind soothed, my heart eased, I gazed at the ruins of the

Abbey of Chelles, and the little lights of the boats moored among the willows by the Marne. The memory of Madame de Lévis is, for me, one of autumnal evening silence.

She died a few years later; she is mingled with the dead, as with the source of all rest. I saw her lowered silently into her grave in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise; she was placed higher than Monsieur de Fontanes, where he sleeps by his son Saint-Marcellin, killed in a duel. Thus, in bowing before the tomb of Madame de Lévis, I encounter two other sepulchers; a man cannot waken one grief without waking another: during the night, diverse flowers bloom, which only open in the dark.

To the affectionate goodness of Madame de Lévis towards me was joined the friendship of Monsieur the Duke de Lévis, the father: in future I ought only to count in generations. Monsieur de Lévis was a fine writer; he had a copious and fecund imagination that felt for his noble race, seen at Quiberon, its ranks spread over the shore.

All shall not end there; it was an impulse of friendship which passed to the second generation. Monsieur the Duke de Lévis, the son, today attached to Monsieur the Comte de Chambord, is close to me; my hereditary affection to him is no less than my fidelity to his august father. The new, delightful, Duchesse de Lévis, his wife, unites with the great name of Aubusson the most brilliant qualities of mind and feeling: it is something to have lived where the graces imprint history with the passage of their unwearying wings!

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 10

THE HUNDRED DAYS IN GHENT, CONTINUED – The Pavillon Marsan's equivalent at Ghent – Monsieur Gaillard, Councillor to the Royal Court – A secret visit by Madame la Baronne de Vitrolles – A note from Monsieur – Fouché

In Ghent, as in Paris, there was a Pavillon Marsan. Each day brought news to Monsieur, from France, which gave birth to interest or a stimulus to imagination.

Monsieur Gaillard, former member of the Oratory, councillor to the Royal Court in Paris, intimate friend of Fouché, arrived among us; he made himself known and was put in touch with Monsieur Capelle.

When I went to Monsieur's, which was rarely, his entourage spoke to me in hushed tones and with many sighs *of a man who (it must be admitted) has behaved marvelously well: he has hindered all of the Emperor's operations; he defended the Faubourg St Germain, etc., etc., etc.* The faithful Marshal Soult was the object of Monsieur's predilection too, and after Fouché, the most loyal man in France.

One day, a carriage arrived at the door of my inn, and I saw Madame the Baronne de Vitrolles emerge: she was arriving charged with powers by the Duc d'Otrante. She brought a note in Monsieur's own hand, in which the Prince declared that he would preserve an eternal gratitude towards those who had saved Monsieur de Vitrolles. Fouché needed no more; armed with this note, he was sure of his future in the event of a second Restoration. From that moment there was no longer any question in Ghent of the immense obligation owed to the excellent Monsieur Fouché of Nantes, or of the impossibility of returning to France except through the goodwill of this keeper of the law: the only problem was how to make this new Redeemer of the Monarchy acceptable to the King.

After the Hundred Days, Madame de Custine pressed me into dining with Fouché at her house. I had met him once before, six months previously, regarding the sentence passed against my poor cousin Armand. The former Minister knew that I had opposed his nomination at Roye, Gonesse, and Arnouville; and as he supposed I possessed some power, he wanted to make peace with me. The best of him was shown in the death of Louis XVI: he was a regicide in all innocence. Verbose, like all the revolutionaries, threshing the air with empty phrases, he churned out a mass of commonplace stuff about *destiny, necessity, the law of things*, mingling with this nonsensical philosophy other nonsense concerning the advance and progress of society, impudent maxims benefiting the strong in favor of the weak; finding no fault with bold confessions regarding the rightness of success, the worthlessness of severed heads, the fair-mindedness of those who prosper, the unfair attitudes of those who suffer, affecting to speak casually and indifferently of the most terrible disasters, as a genius above such stupidities. There escaped from him, concerning everything, not one choice idea, or remarkable insight. I left shrugging my shoulders at crime.

Monsieur Fouché never forgave my dryness and the slightness of the effect he had on me. He thought I would be fascinated by seeing the blade of the fatal machine rising and falling in front of my eyes, as if it were some glory of Sinai; he imagined that I would think that lunatic a colossus who, speaking of the soil of Lyons, said: *'This soil will be ploughed over; on the ruins of this proud and rebellious town will be raised scattered cottages which the friends of equality will hasten to inhabit..... We shall have the energy and courage to cross vast graveyards of conspirators....The blood-stained corpses must be thrown into the Rhone, offering to its twin shores and its mouth the imprint of terror and the mark of the all-powerful*

*people.....We shall celebrate the victory of Toulon; tonight we will give two hundred and sixty rebels to the lightning-bolt.'*

His dreadful embellishments failed to impress me, since Monsieur *de Nantes* had mixed those Republican crimes with Imperial mud; that the *sans-culotte*, metamorphosed into a Duke, had twined the lantern-rope with the cord of the Legion of Honor did not seem to me to be either clever or grand. Jacobins detest men who think little of their atrocities and who scorn their murders; their pride is irritated like that of authors whose talent one contests.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 11

EVENTS IN VIENNA – Negotiations by Monsieur de Saint-Léon, Fouché's envoy – A proposal regarding Monsieur the Duc d'Orléans – Monsieur de Talleyrand – Alexander's discontent with Louis XVIII – Various claims – La Besnardières' report – An unexpected proposal to the Congress from Alexander: Lord Clancarthy causes it to fail – Monsieur de Talleyrand returns: his dispatch to Louis XVIII – The Declaration of Alliance, in truncated form in the official Frankfurt newspaper – Monsieur de Talleyrand wishes the King to return to France via the south-east provinces – Various visits to Vienna by the Prince of Benevento – he writes to me at Ghent: his letter

At the same time that Fouché was sending Monsieur Gaillard to Ghent to negotiate with Louis XVI's brother, his agents in Basle were talking to those of Prince Metternich regarding Napoleon II, and Monsieur de Saint-Léon, dispatched by that same Fouché, was arriving in Vienna to discuss the *possible* coronation of Monsieur the Duke d'Orléans. The friends of the Duke of Otranto could no more count on him than his enemies: on the return of the Legitimate Princes, he kept his old colleague Monsieur Thibaudeau on his list of exiles, while for his part Monsieur de Talleyrand erased from the list or added to the catalogue such and such a proscribed individual, according to whim. Had not the Faubourg Saint-Germain reason to believe in Monsieur Fouché?

Monsieur de Saint-Léon carried three notes to Vienna, one of which was addressed to Monsieur de Talleyrand: the Duke of Otranto proposed to the ambassador of Louis XVIII that he should promote, if he could see the way, the son of Philippe Egalité for the throne. What probity in negotiation! How happy one was to deal with such honest men! Yet we have admired them, poured incense over them, blessed their Seal; we have paid court to them; we have called them *Milord!* That explains the present age. In addition, Monsieur de Montrond arrived, following Monsieur de Saint-Léon.

Monsieur the Duke of Orléans was not conspiring in fact, only by consent; he left intrigue to those of revolutionary affinities: what a lovely society! In the depths of the woods, the plenipotentiary of the King of France leant an ear to Fouché's overtures.

Regarding Monsieur de Talleyrand's 'arrest' at the Barrière d'Enfer, I have mentioned the objective that Monsieur de Talleyrand had possessed, till then, regarding the 'Regency' of Marie-Louise: he was forced to deviate from it, in the event, by the presence of the Bourbons; but he was always ill at ease; it seemed to him that, under the heirs of Saint Louis, a married bishop was never sure of his place. Thus the idea of substituting the cadet branch for the elder branch amused him, and more so because he had previously had relations with the Palais-Royal.

Taking part, without however revealing his hand completely, he hazarded a few words to Alexander regarding Fouché's project. The Tsar had lost interest in Louis XVIII: the latter had offended him in Paris by affecting a superiority of race; he had also offended him by rejecting the idea of the Duc de Berry marrying one of the Emperor's sisters; the Princess was refused for three reasons: she was a schismatic; she was not of an ancient enough line; she was from a family with a history of madness: reasons which were inadequate, were expedients, and which when they became known triply offended Alexander. As a final matter for complaint against the old sovereign of exile, the Tsar objected to the proposed alliance between England, France and Austria. Moreover, it seemed that the succession was an open question; the

whole world claimed its inheritance from Louis XIV's sons: Benjamin Constant, in the name of Madame Murat, pleaded the rights Napoleon's sister believed she had to the Kingdom of Naples; Bernadotte cast a distant gaze on Versailles, apparently because the King of Sweden came from Pau.

La Besnardière, Head of Section in the Foreign Office, called on Monsieur de Caulaincourt; he had with him a bound report, *On the Grievances and Contradictions in France*, aimed at the Legitimacy. The attack having been launched, Monsieur de Talleyrand found the means to communicate the report to Alexander; annoyed and volatile, the autocrat was struck by La Besnardière's pamphlet. Suddenly, in full Congress, and to everyone's astonishment, the Tsar asked if there were not matter for consideration in an examination of the extent to which Monsieur the Duke of Orléans might suit France and Europe in the role of king. It was perhaps one of the most amazing actions of those extraordinary times, and perhaps the more extraordinary in that the matter had been spoken of so little. (A pamphlet which appeared, entitled: *Lettres de l'étranger*, which seems to have been written by an able and well-versed diplomat, lays out the nature of that strange Russian attempt at negotiation in Vienna. Note: Paris, 1840) Lord Clancarty ensured the Russian proposal was turned down: his Lordship declared that they did not have the authority to handle such a serious issue: '*For my part,*' he said, giving a personal opinion '*I think that setting Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans on the throne of France would be to replace a military usurpation by a domestic usurpation, more dangerous to monarchy than all other usurpations.*' The members of the Congress went off to dine and marked the page of their protocols at which they had stopped with the scepter of Saint Louis, as if with a straw.

Given the obstacle the Tsar had encountered, Monsieur de Talleyrand did an about face: reckoning on word of the attempted coup getting out, he sent an account to Louis XVIII (in a dispatch I have seen bearing the number 25 or 27) of that odd session of Congress (It is claimed that in 1830, Monsieur de Talleyrand removed his correspondence with Louis XVIII from the Crown's private archives, just as he had removed everything he had written concerning the death of the Duc d'Enghien and the business with Spain from Bonaparte's archives. Note: Paris, 1840): he thought himself obliged to inform His Majesty of so outrageous a step, since that news, he said, would not be long in reaching the ears of the King: singularly naïve on the part of Monsieur le Prince de Talleyrand.

There had been question of a declaration of the Alliance aimed at informing the world that they had no ill-will against Napoleon; and that they had no intention of imposing an obligatory form of government on France, nor a sovereign who was not of her choice. This latter section of the declaration was suppressed, but was nevertheless announced in the official Frankfurt newspaper. England, in its negotiations with the foreign ministries, used this language liberally, merely as a precaution against a parliamentary tribune.

It is obvious that at the second Restoration the Allies cared as little about re-establishing the Legitimacy, as they did at the first: events alone achieved it. What did it matter to those short-sighted sovereigns if the mother of European monarchies had her throat cut? Would that stop them holding dinners, or deploying their Guards? Today monarchy is seated so firmly, the globe in one hand, the sword in the other!

Monsieur de Talleyrand, whose interests, then, lay in Vienna, feared that the English, whose opinion of him was no longer so favorable, might engage their military force before all the armies were in position, and that the Court of St James might thus acquire the dominant position: that is why he wished to persuade the King to return via the south-eastern provinces, so that he would find himself under the protection of the troops of the Austrian Empire and Government. The Duke of Wellington was thus given

specific orders not to commence hostilities; thus it was Napoleon who decided upon the battle of Waterloo: nothing can arrest such a destiny.

These historical facts, of the most intriguing nature, have generally been ignored; just as, again, a confused opinion has been gained of the Treaty of Vienna, relative to France: it has been taken as being the iniquitous creation of a group of victorious sovereigns bent on our ruin; unfortunately, if it was harsh, it's content was aggravated by the hand of a Frenchman: when Monsieur de Talleyrand was not conspiring, he was meddling.

Prussia wanted Saxony, which sooner or later would become its prey; France should have favored that desire, since with Saxony obtaining compensation in the form of the Rhine Circles, we retained Landau and our enclaves; Coblentz and other fortresses passed to a friendly little State which, situated between us and Prussia, prevented any point of contact; and the keys of France would not be handed to Frederick's shade. For the three millions it would cost Saxony, Monsieur de Talleyrand opposed the schemes of the Berlin Government; but in order to obtain Alexander's agreement to the existence of the former Saxony, our ambassador was obliged to sacrifice Poland to the Tsar, even though the other Powers would have wished for a Poland that restricted Muscovite movement in the north in some way. The Bourbons of Naples bought the city back for money, as did the sovereign of Dresden. Monsieur de Talleyrand claimed he had the right to a grant in return for his duchy of Benevento: he sold his livery on quitting his master. Where France lost so much, could not Monsieur de Talleyrand have lost a little also? Benevento, moreover, did not belong to the Grand Chamberlain: by virtue of the re-establishment of former treaties, that principality was part of the Papal States.

Such were the diplomatic transactions taking place in Vienna, while we were at Ghent. I received, in the latter residence, this letter from Monsieur de Talleyrand: '*Vienna, the 4th of May.*

*I have learnt with great pleasure, Monsieur, that you are at Ghent, since circumstances demand that the King be surrounded by strong and independent men.*

*You will surely have thought how useful it would be to refute by strongly argued publications all the new doctrines that they wish to propagate in the official pieces appearing in France.*

*It would have been useful if something appeared whose object was to establish that the declaration of the 31st of March, signed in Paris by the Allies, that the deposition, the abdication, the treaty of the 11th April which was its consequence, were in effect preliminary, indispensable and absolute conditions for the treaty of 30th of May; that is to say that without those previous conditions the treaty could not have been signed. That said, whoever violates the aforesaid conditions, or seconds their violation, destroys the peace the treaty establishes. It is he and his accomplices therefore who declare war on Europe.*

*For foreign as for home consumption, a discussion conducted in this light would be beneficial; it is only necessary for it to be well done, so do undertake it.*

*Accept, Monsieur, the homage of my sincere attachment and my highest consideration.*

TALLEYRAND

*I hope to have the honor of seeing you in a month's time.'*

Our Minister in Vienna was faithful in his hatred of the great phantom that had escaped the shadows; he dreaded his wings being clipped. This letter shows moreover all Monsieur de Talleyrand was capable of doing, when he wrote in his own right: he had the goodness to show me the *motif*, relying on me to elaborate upon it. Was stopping Napoleon a matter of diplomatic phrases about the deposition, the abdication, the treaties of the 11th of April and the 30th of May? I was very grateful for my instructions by virtue of my certification as a *strong man*, but I did not follow them: an ambassador *in petto*, I did not at that time involve myself with foreign affairs; I was only concerned with my Ministry of the Interior for the interim.

But what was happening in Paris?



## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 12

THE HUNDRED DAYS IN PARIS – The effect of the Legitimacy's departure from France – Bonaparte's astonishment – He is forced to capitulate to ideas he thought moribund – His new system – Three mighty players left – Liberal illusions – Clubs and Federations – Conjuring away the Republic: the Supplementary Act – The Chamber of Representatives convened – The futile Champ-De-Mai

I would like to show you a side to events that history does not reveal; history only shows one side, while these Memoirs have the advantage of displaying both sides of the cloth: in that way, they depict humanity more completely in displaying, like Shakespeare's tragedies, high and low scenes. There are, throughout, cottages neighboring on palaces, men who weep beside men who laugh, rag-pickers bowed beneath their baskets beside kings who have lost their throne: what does the fall of Darius mean to the slave present at the battle of Arbela?

Ghent was only a tiring-room behind the scenes of the play opening in Paris. There were still men of renown in Europe. In 1800 I began my career with Alexander and Napoleon; why had I not followed those leading actors, my contemporaries, onto the world stage? Why only Ghent: because the heavens send us where they will. From *the little Hundred Days* at Ghent, let us pass to the great Hundred Days in Paris.

I have told you the reasons which should have kept Bonaparte on the island of Elba, and the primary reasons or rather the necessity derived from his character which compelled him to leave his exile. But the march from Cannes to Paris exhausted what was left of the former man: in Paris the talisman was shattered.

The few mistakes that the law had righted sufficed to make re-establishment of arbitrary justice impossible. Despotism muzzles the masses, and frees individuals within certain limits; anarchy unchains the masses, and subjugates independent individuals. From that it can be seen that despotism appears as liberty, when it succeeds anarchy; it remains wholly what it is when it replaces liberty: a liberator after the Directory constitution, Bonaparte was an oppressor after the Charter. He knew this so well that he thought himself obliged to move further from Louis XVIII and turn to the sources of national sovereignty. He, who had trampled on the people as their master, was reduced to making himself once more a tribune of the people, courting the favor of the suburbs, parodying the birth of the Revolution, stammering out the old language of liberty which brought a grimace to his lips, and every syllable of which made his sword twitch with anger.

His destiny, as a power, was indeed so fulfilled, that Napoleon's genius was nowhere evident during the Hundred Days. That genius was one of victory and order, not one of defeat and freedom: now he could achieve nothing by victory which had betrayed him, nothing by order since it existed without him. In his astonishment he said: 'See what the Bourbons have done with France in a few months! It will take years for me to undo.' It was not the work of the Legitimacy that the conqueror witnessed it was the work of the *Charter*; he had left France mute and prostrate, he found it upright and vocal: in the naivety of his absolute will, he mistook liberty for disorder.

And everywhere Bonaparte was forced to capitulate before ideas which at first sight he could not defeat. Given his lack of real popularity, workers, paid forty *sous* a head, went to the Carrousel at the end of their

day's work to yell: *Long Live the Emperor!* It was called going to the shout. His first proclamations announce miracles of forgiveness and forgetting; individuals are declared to be free, the nation free, the Press free; nothing is desired but the peace, liberty, and happiness of the people; the whole Imperial system was altered; the age of gold was about to be reborn. In order to make practice conform to theory, France is divided into seven large police divisions; the seven lieutenants are granted the same powers that Directors General had under the Consulate and Empire: one is given to understand that there are these protectors of individual freedom at Lyons, Bordeaux, Milan, Florence, Lisbon, Hamburg, and Amsterdam. Above these lieutenants, Bonaparte elevates, in a hierarchy more and more *favorable to liberty*, extraordinary Commissioners, in the manner of representatives of the people under the Convention.

The police, directed by Fouché, tell everyone, by means of solemn proclamations, that they will only serve from now on to spread philosophy, that they will only act in future according to the principles of virtue.

Bonaparte re-establishes, by decree, the National Guard of the Kingdom, whose name alone once put him in a fever. He is forced to annul the divorce pronounced under the Empire between despotism and demagoguery, and support their new alliance: from this marriage is to be born, on the Champ-de-Mai, Liberty, the red cap and the turban on her head, the Mameluke's sabre at her waist, the revolutionary axe in her hand; Liberty surrounded by the shades of those thousands of victims sacrificed on her scaffolds, or on the burning plains of Spain and in the frozen wastes of Russia. Before victory, Mamelukes are Jacobins; after victory Jacobins become Mamelukes: Sparta is for times of danger, Constantinople for times of triumph.

Bonaparte would have much preferred to take sole authority on himself, but that was not possible; he found men disposed to dispute it with him: firstly Republicans of good faith, delivered from the chains of despotism and the rules of monarchy, desired to keep a freedom which was perhaps no more than a noble error; next there were the furious representatives of the old faction of the Mountain: these latter, humiliated by being no more than police spies for a despot, under the Empire, seemed determined on reclaiming, on their own account, that freedom to do anything whose privilege they had ceded to their master for fifteen years.

But neither the Republicans, nor the revolutionaries, nor Bonaparte's satellites, were strong enough to establish their power separately, or to subjugate one another. Threatened from outside by invasion, pursued within by public opinion, they realized that if they were divided, they would be lost: in order to escape the danger, they deferred their quarrel; the former brought to their mutual defence their systems and illusions, the latter their terrors and perversities. There was not a scrap of good faith in the pact; each, the crisis over, promised themselves to turn it to their own profit; all seeking in advance to assure themselves of the fruits of victory. In this frightening game of *trente et un*, three mighty players held the bank in turn: liberty, anarchy, and despotism, all three cheating and trying to win something lost to all.

Filled with this idea, they took no harsh measures against those lost children who urged revolutionary measures: federated clubs were formed in the suburbs and federations organized themselves according to strict pledges in Brittany, Anjou, Lyonnais and Burgundy; the Marseillaise and the Carmagnole were sung; a club, established in Paris, corresponded with other clubs in the provinces; the revival of the Journal des Patriotes was announced. But, as for that, what confidence could the revivalists of 1793

inspire? Did we not know how they interpreted liberty, equality, and the rights of man? Were they more moral, wiser, or more sincere after their enormities than before? Because they were tarnished by all the vices did that make them capable of all the virtues? Crime is not relinquished as easily as a crown; the brow round which a dreadful headband is bound retains its ineffaceable marks.

The idea of a genius with the rank of Emperor lowering his ambitions to those of a Commander-in-Chief or President of the Republic was an illusion: the red cap, which they set on the head of his statues during the Hundred Days, could have announced to Bonaparte the recapture of his crown, only if it were given to athletes who circle the world in order to run the same course twice.

However, prominent liberals promised themselves victory: errant individuals like Benjamin Constant, and fools like Monsieur Simonde de Sismondi, talked of appointing the Prince de Canino as Minister of the Interior, Lieutenant-General Comte Carnot as Minister of War, and Comte Merlin as Justice Minister. Apparently demoralized, Bonaparte made no opposition to the democratic movements which, in the last result, furnished conscripts for his army. He allowed them to attack him in their pamphlets; caricatures repeated *Isle of Elba* to him as the parrots used to shriek *Péronne* at Louis XI. They preached liberty and equality to the escapee from gaol while addressing him as tu; he listened to their remonstrances with an air of compunction. Suddenly, breaking the bonds in which it was claimed he was enveloped, he proclaimed, on his own authority, not a plebeian constitution, but an aristocratic one, a Supplementary Act to the constitution of the Empire.

The Republic dreamed of changing itself into the former Imperial Government, updated with feudalism, by means of this skillful conjuring trick. The *Supplementary Act* robbed Bonaparte of the republican movement and created malcontents in almost all the other parties. License reigned in Paris, anarchy in the provinces; the civil and military authorities fought it out; here, they threatened to burn chateaux and cut priests' throats: there, they flew the white banner and shouted: *Long Live the King!* Attacked, Bonaparte retreated; he withdrew mayoral nominations from his Extraordinary Commissioners and returned such powers of nomination to the people. Concerned by the multiplicity of votes against the *Supplementary Act*, he abandoned his dictatorship as a result and summoned the Chamber of Representatives in accord with an act which had not yet been accepted. Wandering from pitfall to pitfall, he was scarcely delivered from one danger before he met with another: sovereign of a day, how could he institute a hereditary peerage that the spirit of freedom opposed? How could he govern the two Chambers? Would they show passive obedience? What were the views of the Chambers concerning the projected gathering on the Champ-de-Mai, which had no real purpose, since the Supplementary Act had been put into effect before the votes were counted? Was that gathering, composed of thirty thousand electors to consider itself representative of the nation?

This Champ-de-Mai, announced with such pomp and celebrated on the 1st of June, ended up as a simple file past by the troops and a distribution of standards before a disregarded altar. Napoleon, surrounded by his brothers, State dignitaries, Marshals, and the Civil and Judicial Corps, proclaimed the sovereignty of the people in which he had no belief. The citizens imagined they were themselves creating a Constitution on that solemn day; the peaceable bourgeois were expecting someone to declare Napoleon's abdication in favor of his son; the abdication plotted at Basle between the agents of Fouché and Prince Metternich: it would have been a ridiculous political trap. The Supplementary Act appeared, moreover, to pay homage

to the Legitimacy; with some vital differences, above all lacking the *abolition of confiscation* (of assets), it was the Charter.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 13

#### THE HUNDRED DAYS IN PARIS, CONTINUED – Bonaparte's anxiety and bitterness

These sudden changes, this confusion of all things, announced the death throes of despotism: tyranny retained the instinct for evil but no longer possessed the power. However, the Emperor was not to receive his mortal blow from within, since the power which fought him was as exhausted as himself; the Titan, of Revolution, whom Napoleon had once toppled, had not recovered his natural force; now the two giants dealt each other useless blows; it was no more than the struggle of two shades.

For Bonaparte these general frustrations were added to the domestic tribulations and anxieties of the Palace: he announced to France, the return of the Empress and the King of Rome, and neither of them appeared. Apropos the Queen of Holland, whom Louis XVIII made Duchesse de Saint-Leu, he commented: *'When one has enjoyed family prosperity, one should embrace its adversities.'* Joseph, hastening from Switzerland, merely asked for money: Lucien disturbed him with his liberal connections; Murat, a conspirator against his brother-in-law at first, was too hasty, when returning to him, in attacking the Austrians: despoiled of the Kingdom of Naples and a fugitive of ill omen, he waited, under arrest near Marseilles, the catastrophe which I may tell you of later.

Yet could the Emperor trust his erstwhile supporters and so-called friends? Had they not deserted him shamefully at the time of his fall? That Senate which crawled at his feet, now ensconced in the peerage, had it not decreed its benefactor's deposition? Could he believe those men when they came to him and said: 'The interests of France are inseparable from your own. If Fortune betrays your efforts, Sire, reverses will not weaken our perseverance and will double our attachment to your person.' Your perseverance! Your attachment doubled by misfortune! You said this on the 11th of June 1815: what was it you had uttered on the 2nd of April 1814? What would you say a few weeks later, on the 19th of July 1815?

The Minister of the Imperial Police, as you have seen, was in correspondence with Ghent, Vienna, and Basle; the Marshals to whom Bonaparte was forced to entrust the command of his troops had only recently sworn loyalty to Louis XVIII; they had published the most violent proclamations against Bonaparte (see that of Marshal Soult above): since then, it is true, they had wedded themselves to their Sultan once more; but if he had been arrested at Grenoble, what would they have done with him? Does it suffice to break an oath to restore in full force another oath which has been violated? Does double-perjury equate to loyalty?

A few days later, those who had sworn obedience on the Champ-de-Mai would reaffirm their devotion to Louis XVIII at the Tuileries; they would approach the sacred table of the God of Peace, in order to be appointed ministers at the banquet of war; heralds-at-arms and bearers of the royal insignia at Bonaparte's coronation, they would fulfil the same functions at the coronation of Charles X; then, as agents of another power, they would lead that King to Cherbourg as a prisoner, trying to find a little free corner of their consciences in which to hang the badge of their new oath. It is difficult being born in an age of improbity, in times when two men talking together must take care not to give tongue to certain words, for fear of offending each other or making each other blush.

Those who had not felt able to attach themselves to Napoleon in his glory, who had not been able to adhere from gratitude to the benefactor from whom they had received their wealth, honors and their very names, were they about to sacrifice themselves to his meagre hopes? Were they going to bind themselves to a precarious destiny, at its re-commencement, those ingrates whom a destiny fulfilled by unexampled successes and the spoils of sixteen victorious years had failed to bind? Those many chrysalises, which, between one spring and another, had put off and on, shed and resumed the skins of Legitimist and Revolutionary, follower of Napoleon, follower of the Bourbons; those many promises made and broken; those many crosses switched from the knight's breast to his horse's tail, from his horse's tail to the knight's breast; the many valiant warriors changing banners, strewing the lists with their false pledges of loyalty; those many noble ladies, waiting in turn on Marie-Louise and Marie-Caroline, were calculated to leave in the depths of Napoleon's spirit only mistrust, horror and contempt; that great man aged before his time stood alone among all those traitors, his fate and all those human beings, on the trembling earth, beneath a hostile sky, face to face with his completed destiny and the judgement of God.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 14

#### A Resolution in Vienna – Action in Paris

Napoleon had found not loyal friends but phantoms of his past glory; they escorted him, as I have said, from the place where he had disembarked to the capital of France. But the eagles, which had *flown from steeple to steeple* from Cannes to Paris, sank exhausted onto the chimneys of the Tuileries, without power to travel further.

Napoleon does not hurl himself, with an enthusiastic populace, on Belgium, before an Anglo-Prussian army assembles there: he halts; he tries to negotiate with Europe, and maintain, humbly, the treaties the Legitimacy had made. The Congress of Vienna confronts Monsieur the Duke of Vicenza with the abdication of the 11th of April 1814: by that abdication Bonaparte *recognized that he was the sole obstacle to the re-establishment of peace in Europe*, and in consequence *renounced, for himself and his heirs, the thrones of France and Italy*. Now, since he has returned in order to re-establish his power, he is manifestly violating the Treaty of Paris, and places himself once more in a political state existing prior to the 31st of March 1814: thus it is he, Bonaparte, who declares war on Europe, and not Europe on Bonaparte. These logical quibbles by lawyers of diplomacy, as I have remarked apropos of Monsieur de Talleyrand's letter, were worth whatever they might be worth, before a battle.

The news of Bonaparte's landing at Cannes reached Vienna on the 7th of March, in the midst of an entertainment representing a gathering of the divinities of Olympus and Parnassus. Alexander had just received the proposal for an alliance between France, Austria and England: he hesitated a moment between the two items, then said: '*It is not about me, but world security.*' And a courier is sent to St Petersburg with orders to dispatch the Guards. The armies, which were withdrawing, halt; their lengthy lines face about, and eight hundred thousand of the enemy turn their gaze towards France. Bonaparte prepares himself for war; he is awaited on the new Catalaunian Fields: God has deferred to there the battle which is to put an end to an era of battles.

The warmth from the wings of the victor of Marengo and Austerlitz was enough to hatch armies in a France which was nothing more than a vast nest of soldiers. Bonaparte had given his legions their epithets of *the invincible, the terrible, the incomparable*; seven armies were identified, which took over the titles of the armies of the Pyrenees, Alps, Jura, Moselle and Rhine: grandiose labels which served as a framework for assumed troop strengths, anticipated triumphs. The real army was assembled at Paris and at Laon; a hundred and fifty mobile batteries, ten thousand elite soldiers forming the Guard; eighteen thousand recruits, illustrious at Lützen and Bautzen; thirty thousand veterans, officers and junior officers, garrisoned in defensive strongholds; seven departments in the north and east ready to rise en masse; a hundred and eighty thousand men of the National Guard deployed; Frankish corps in Lorraine, Alsace and Franche-Comté; Federalists offering their pikes and the force of their arms; Paris manufacturing three thousand rifles a day: such were the Emperor's resources. Perhaps he would have overturned the world one more time, if he could have brought himself, while liberating the country, to call foreign nations to freedom. The moment was propitious: the kings who had promised their subjects constitutional governments had broken their word, shamelessly. But liberty was antipathetic to Napoleon once he had drunk from the chalice of power; he preferred to be conquered with his soldiers than conquer with the

nations. The troops he sent successively on their way towards the Low Countries amounted to seventy thousand men.



## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 15

What was going on in Ghent – Monsieur de Blacas

We *émigrés*, in Charles V's city, behaved like the women of that town: sitting beside their windows, they watched, in little angled mirrors, the soldiers passing by in the street. Louis XVIII was there, in a corner, completely forgotten; he merely received a note from time to time from the Prince de Talleyrand on his way back from Vienna, or a few lines from members of the diplomatic corps residing with the Duke of Wellington in the role of commissioners, Messieurs Pozzo di Borgo, Baron von Vincent, etc., etc. People had better things to do than think about us! A man strange to politics would never have dreamed that an invalid, hidden beside the Lys, would be helped back to the throne by the efforts of thousands of soldiers ready to slit throats: soldiers of whom he was neither king nor leader, who gave no thought to him, who knew nothing of his name or his existence. Of two places in such close proximity, Ghent and Waterloo, never has one seemed so obscure, the other so brightly-lit: the Legitimacy was laid up in store like an old broken wagon.

We knew Bonaparte's forces were approaching; we had nothing to protect us but two small companies under the command of the Duc de Berry, a Prince whose blood would not serve us, since he was already summoned elsewhere. A thousand cavalry, detached from the French army, would be on us within a few hours. The fortifications of Ghent had been demolished; the defenses which remained would be all the more easily overcome since the Belgian population was not sympathetic to us. The scene I had witnessed at the Tuileries was repeated: His Majesty's carriages were secretly prepared; the horses were readied. We, the loyal Ministers, we would have to splash along behind, by God's grace. MONSIEUR left for Brussels, charged with keeping a close eye on the action.

Monsieur de Blacas had become sad and anxious; I, poor man, consoled him. In Vienna things were not going well for him; Monsieur de Talleyrand mocked him; the royalists accused him of being the reason for Bonaparte's return. Thus, on either hand, there was no longer an honorable exile for him in England, no longer highest office possible in France: I was his sole support. I met him quite often in the Horse-Market, where he trotted about alone; hitching myself to him, I fell in step *with his sad thought*. The man whom I had defended in Ghent and England, and did defend in France after the Hundred Days, and even in the later preface to *La Monarchie Selon La Charte*, that man has always opposed me: that would not have mattered if he had not been a drag on the monarchy. I do not repent of my past foolishness; but I must redress in these *Memoirs* the blows aimed at my judgement and my good-heartedness.

BOOK XXIII  
CHAPTER 16  
The Battle of Waterloo

On the 18th of June 1815, towards midday, I left Ghent by the Brussels gate; I was going to finish my walk alone on the highroad. I had taken Caesar's Commentaries with me and I strolled along, immersed in my reading. I was already more than three miles from the city, when I thought I heard a dull rumble: I stopped and looked up at the cloudy sky, deliberating with myself whether to go on, or turn back towards Ghent for fear of a storm. I listened: I heard only the cry of a moorhen in the rushes and the chime of a village clock. I pursued my course: I had not gone thirty paces before the rumbling began again, now short, now long, at irregular intervals; sometimes it was only perceptible as a tremor of the air, so distant that it communicated itself to the ground over those vast plains. Detonations, less prolonged, less undulating, less interconnected than those of thunder, gave rise in my mind to the thought of it being a battle. I found myself opposite a poplar planted at the corner of a hop-field. I crossed the road and leant against the trunk of the tree, my face turned towards Brussels. A southerly wind sprang up and brought me a more distinct sound of artillery. That great battle, as yet nameless, whose echoes I heard at the foot of the poplar, and for whose unknown obsequies a village clock had just chimed, was the Battle of Waterloo.

Silent and solitary listener to the mighty judgement of the fates, I would have been less moved if I had been in the fray: the peril, the firing, the press of death would have left me no time for meditation; but alone under a tree, in the Ghent countryside, like a shepherd of the flocks that grazed around me, I was overwhelmed by the weight of reflection: What battle was this? Would it be decisive? Was Napoleon there in person? Were lots being cast for the world, as they had been for Christ's garments? What would be the consequence for the nations, in the event of victory or defeat for one army or the other, freedom or slavery? Ah, what blood must be flowing! Was not every sound that reached my ears some Frenchman's last sigh? Was this a new Crécy, a new Poitiers, a new Agincourt, to delight France's most implacable enemies? If they triumphed, was not our glory lost? If Napoleon won the day, what would become of our freedom? Although victory for Napoleon meant eternal exile for me, my country was at that moment foremost in my heart; my prayers were for France's oppressor, if he, in saving our honor, were to rescue us from foreign domination.

What if Wellington should triumph? Then the legitimacy would re-enter Paris behind those red uniforms which had just been re-dyed scarlet in French blood! Royalty would have, for coaches at its coronation, ambulance-carts filled with our maimed grenadiers! What sort of a Restoration would be accomplished under such auspices? ....This is only a mere fraction of the thoughts that tormented me. Each roar of the cannons brought me the shock and doubled my rate of heartbeats. A few miles distant from that immense chaos, I saw nothing; I could not touch the huge funeral pyre growing minute by minute at Waterloo, just as on the bank of the Nile, on the shore at Bulak, I stretched out my hands towards the Pyramids in vain.

No traveller appeared; some women in the fields, peaceably hoeing rows of vegetables, did not seem to have heard the noise. But then I saw a courier approaching: I left the foot of my tree and stood in the center of the road; I stopped the courier and questioned him. He belonged to the Duc de Berry and was coming from Alost. He told me: '*Bonaparte entered Brussels yesterday (the 17th of June) after a bloody*

*fight. Battle was due to be re-joined today (the 18th of June). The Allies are thought to have suffered a decisive defeat, and the order to retreat has been given.'*

The courier continued on his way.

I followed in haste: I was passed by the carriage of a merchant fleeing with his family; he confirmed the courier's story.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 17

#### Confusion in Ghent – The reality of Waterloo

When I returned to Ghent all was confusion: the city gates were being closed; the wickets alone remained half-open; some inadequately armed civilians and a few soldiers from the army depot were standing guard. I went to the King's residence.

Monsieur had just arrived by a circuitous route: he had left Brussels at the false news that Bonaparte was about to enter the city, and that having lost the first battle there was no hope of winning a second. It was said that that because the Prussians had not taken up their positions the English had been crushed.

At these reports, the stampede became general: those who had any resources, left; I, who was used to possessing nothing, was ready to go at any time as always. I wanted Madame Chateaubriand, a great Bonapartist but one who hated gunfire, to depart before me: she refused to quit me.

In the evening there was a Council meeting at His Majesty's: we heard Monsieur's reports again and the hearsay picked up at the Military Commander's and at Baron Eckstein's. The wagon containing the Crown jewels was hitched to the horses: I had no need of a wagon to remove my treasure. I put the black silk handkerchief in which I wrap my head at night into my limp Interior-Ministry portfolio, and placed myself at His Majesty's disposal, carrying that important document on the affairs of the Legitimacy. I was richer when I first emigrated, when my haversack did duty as a pillow and served as a swaddling band for Atala: but in 1815 Atala was a tall, gawky girl of thirteen or fourteen, who went about all by herself, and who, to her father's honor, had got herself talked about too much.

On the 19th of June, at one in the morning, a letter from Monsieur Pozzo, delivered to the King by courier, established the true facts. Bonaparte had not entered Brussels; he had assuredly lost the Battle of Waterloo. Leaving Paris on the 12th of June, he rejoined the army on the 14th. On the 15th, he broke the enemy lines on the Sambre. On the 16th, he beat the Prussians on those fields of Fleurus where victory always seems to favor the French. The villages of Ligny and Saint-Amaund were taken. At Quatre-Bras, a fresh success: The Duke of Brunswick remained among the dead. Blücher in full retreat fell back upon a reserve of thirty thousand men, under the command of General von Bülow; the Duke of Wellington, with the English and Dutch, stood with his back to Brussels.

On the morning of the 18th, before the first shot had been fired, the Duke of Wellington declared that he would be able to hold out until three; but that at that time, if the Prussians had not appeared, he would necessarily be destroyed: forced back on Planchenois and Brussels, he was cut off from all retreat. Surprised by Napoleon, his position was strategically deplorable; he had accepted it, not chosen it.

The French, first advancing on the enemy's left flank, took the heights which overlook the Manor of Hougoumont as far as the farms of La Haye-Sainte and Papelotte; on the right they attacked the village of Mont Saint-Jean; the farm of La Haye-Saint, in the center, was taken by Prince Jérôme. But the Prussian reserves appeared near Saint-Lambert at six in the evening: a new and furious attack was made on the village of La Haye-Sainte; Blucher arrived with fresh troops and cut off the squares of the Imperial Guard from the rest of our scattered troops. Around that motionless phalanx, the torrent of fugitives carried everything with it among clouds of dust, fiery smoke and grape-shot, in a gloom streaked with Congreve

rockets, amidst the roar of three hundred guns, and the headlong gallop of twenty-five thousand horses: it was like the summation of all the battles of the Empire. Twice the French cried: '*Victory!*' and twice their shouts were stifled by the pressure of the enemy columns. The fire from our lines died down; the cartridges were exhausted; a few wounded grenadiers, among the thirty thousand dead, with a hundred thousand blood-stained cannon-balls lying cold and conglobated at their feet, stood erect leaning on their muskets, bayonets broken, and cannon emptied. Not far from them, the Man of Battles, his gaze fixed, listened to the last cannonade of all those he would hear during his life-time. On that field of slaughter, his brother Jérôme was still fighting with his outnumbered dying battalions, but his courage could not retrieve victory.

The number of Allied dead was estimated at eighteen thousand, the number of French dead at twenty-five thousand; two hundred English officers died; almost all Wellington's aides-de-camp were killed or wounded; there was barely a family in England which did not suffer bereavement. The Prince of Orange was hit by a bullet in the shoulder; Baron de Vincent, the Austrian Ambassador, had his hand pierced. The English owed their success to the Irish regiments and the Scottish Highland Brigade which our cavalry charges could not break. General Grouchy's corps, failing to advance, took no part in the affair. The two armies exchanged steel and fire with the bravery and persistence that had fueled national enmity for ten centuries. Viscount Castelreagh, recounting the events of the battle in the Lords, said: '*The English and French soldiers, after the battle, washed their blood-stained hands in a little stream, and congratulated each other on all sides on their courage.*' Wellington had always been a fatal obstacle to Bonaparte, or rather English genius, the rival to French genius, barred the way to victory. Today the Prussians claim from the English the honor of that decisive battle; but, in war, it is not the final action, it is fame which creates the conqueror: it was not Bonaparte who really won the battle of Jena.

The French errors were considerable: they were mistaken as to hostile and friendly corps; they occupied the position at Quatre-Bras too late; Marshal Grouchy, who was ordered to hold back the Prussians with his thirty-six thousand men, allowed them to pass him without his catching sight of them; from this stemmed the reproaches that our generals addressed to him. Bonaparte attacked head-on according to his custom instead of turning the English flanks, and concerned himself, with the presumption of a master, about cutting off the retreat of an enemy that had not yet been conquered.

Many falsehoods and a few rather curious truths have been credited to this catastrophe. The phrase: '*The Guard dies but does not surrender*' is an invention which no one dares to defend any more. It appears certain that at the commencement of the action, Soult made some strategic observations to the Emperor: '*Because Wellington has beaten you,*' Napoleon replied dryly, '*you always think him a great general.*' At the end of the battle, Monsieur de Turenne urged Bonaparte to withdraw, to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy: Bonaparte, emerging from thought as if from a dream, was enraged at first; then suddenly, in the midst of his anger, he threw himself on his horse and fled.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 18

Return of the Emperor – Re-appearance of Lafayette – Bonaparte's fresh abdication – Stormy sessions of the Chamber of Peers - Threatening omens for the Second Restoration

On the 19th of June a hundred-gun salute from the Invalides announced the victories at Ligny, the Sambre, Charleroi, and Quatre-Bras; it celebrated the now-dead victories of the eve of Waterloo. The first courier who brought the news of that defeat, one of the greatest in history considering its results, was Napoleon himself: he entered the gate on the night of the 21st; one would have said it was his shade returning to tell his friends he was no more. He halted at the Elysée-Bourbon: when he arrived from Elba he had halted at the Tuileries; those two sanctuaries, chosen instinctively, revealed his altered fate.

Fallen to the foreigner in noble combat, Napoleon had to suffer, in Paris, attacks from lawyers who wanted to rake over his misfortunes: he regretted not having dissolved the Chamber before his departure for the army; he was also frequently sorry he had not had Fouché and Talleyrand shot. But it is certain that Bonaparte, after Waterloo, forbade all violence, either in obedience to his usually calm temperament, or because he had been tamed by fate; he no longer said as he had before his first abdication: '*They will see what a great man's death is like.*' That eloquence was gone. Antipathetic to liberty, he thought of quashing that Chamber of Representatives presided over by Lanjuinais, of citizens become Senators, of Senators become Peers, of Peers become citizens again, of citizens about to become Peers again. General Lafayette, one of the deputies, read from the rostrum a proposal which declared: '*The Chamber to be in permanent sitting, for it to be a crime of high treason to make any attempt to dissolve it, and for anyone to be considered a traitor to the country, and judged as such, who renders himself guilty of such.*' (21st of June 1815.)

The General's speech commenced with these words: '*Gentlemen, in raising for the first time in many years a voice which the former friends of liberty will still recognize, I feel myself summoned to speak to you of the danger facing the country...*

*This is the moment for us to rally to the tricolor, to that of '89, that of liberty, equality and public order.'*

The anachronism of that speech created an illusion for an instant: it was as if one saw the Revolution, personified in Lafayette, emerge from the tomb and present itself wrinkled and pallid at the rostrum. But these motions regarding order, taken from Mirabeau, were no more than weapons beyond use, drawn from an antique arsenal. Though Lafayette was linking the end of his life to its beginning in a noble manner, it was not in his power to weld together the two sections of a chain broken by time. Benjamin Constant went to see the Emperor at the Elysée-Bourbon; he found him in the garden. The crowds, filling the Avenue de Marigny, were shouting: '*Long Live the Emperor!*' a moving cry escaping from the populace's innards; it addressed the vanquished! Bonaparte said to Benjamin Constant: '*What do they owe me? I found them, and left them, poor.*' They were perhaps his only heartfelt words, if, that is, the deputy's emotion did not confuse his ears. Bonaparte, foreseeing the eventuality, anticipated the summons being prepared for him; he abdicated in order not to be forced to abdicate: '*My political life is over,*' he said, '*I declare my son, with the title of Napoleon II, Emperor of the French.*' A vain attempt, like that declaration of Charles X in favor of Henri V: one can only hand on crowns one possesses, and men foil legacies made in adversity. Besides, the Emperor was no more sincere in relinquishing the throne for a

second time than he had been on the first occasion; also, when the French Commissioners went to tell the Duke of Wellington that Napoleon had abdicated, he replied: *'I knew that a year ago.'*

The Chamber of Representatives, after a number of debates in which Manuel spoke, accepted the fresh abdication of its sovereign, but in vague terms and without naming the Regency.

An executive committee was created: the Duke of Otranto presided; three Ministers, a Councillor of State and an Imperial General composed it, and despoiled their master anew: they were Fouché, Caulaincourt, Carnot, Quinette, and Grenier.

During these transactions, Bonaparte turned over ideas in his head: *'I no longer have an army,'* he thought, *'I have only fugitives. A majority of the Chamber of Deputies are fine; I only have Lafayette, Lanjuinais and a few others against me. If the nation rises, the enemy will be wiped out; if instead of raising a levy, they spend their time arguing, all will be lost. The nation has not sent the Deputies to overthrow me, but to support me. I fear them not at all, whatever they do; I will always be the idol of the people and the army: if I said a word they would yield. But if we quarrel among ourselves instead of listening to each other, we will meet the fate of the Low Countries.'*

A deputation from the Chamber of Representatives arriving to congratulate him on his fresh abdication, he replied: *'Thank you: I hope that my abdication will bring France happiness: but I do not expect it.'*

He repented of it soon afterwards, when he realized that the Chamber of Representatives had nominated a committee of five members. He said to the Ministers; *'I did not abdicate in favor of a new Directory; I abdicated in favor of my son: if he is not proclaimed, my abdication is null and void. It is not by showing the Allies a bowed head, while kneeling on the ground, that the Chambers will force them to recognize national independence.'*

He complained that Lafayette, Sébastiani, Pontécoulant and Benjamin Constant had conspired against him, and that the rest of the Chamber lacked energy. He said that he alone could renew everything, but that the leaders would never consent to it, that they would rather be swallowed by the abyss than unite with him, Napoleon, to seal it.

On the 27th of June, at Malmaison, he wrote this sublime letter: *'In abdicating power, I have not renounced the noblest right of a citizen, that of defending my country. In these grave circumstances, I offer my services as a general, regarding myself still as the foremost soldier of the motherland.'*

The Duke of Bassano having represented to him that the Chambers would not support him: *'Well, I can see,'* he said, *'that I must always concede. That vile Fouché cheats you, only Caulaincourt and Carnot are worth anything; but what can they do, with a traitor, Fouché, and two fools, Quinette and Grenier, and two Chambers that do not know what they want? You all believe like imbeciles at the fine promises made by foreigners; you think they'll put a chicken in the pot, and give you a prince after their fashion, do you? You are wrong.'*

Plenipotentiaries were sent to the Allies. On the 29th of June, Napoleon asked for two frigates, stationed at Rochefort, to carry him away from France; while waiting for them he withdrew to Malmaison.

Discussion was lively in the Chamber of Peers. A long time enemy of Bonaparte, Carnot, who signed the order for the executions at Avignon, without taking the time to read them, had time, during the Hundred Days, to submerge his republicanism beneath the title of count. On the 22nd of June, at the Luxembourg he had read a letter from the Minister of War, containing an exaggerated report of French military resources. Ney, newly arrived, could not listen to it without anger. Napoleon in his bulletins had spoken of the Marshal with barely concealed dissatisfaction, and Gourgaud accused Ney of having been the principal cause of the Battle of Waterloo being lost. Ney rose and said: *'The report is false, false on all points. Grouchy could only have had twenty to twenty-five thousand men under his command at the very most. There was hardly a single soldier of the Guard to rally: I commanded it; I saw it completely destroyed before leaving the field of battle. The enemy is at Nivelle with eighty-thousand men; they can be in Paris in six days: you have no other means of saving the country than opening negotiations.'*

Flahaut, the aide-de-camp, tried to justify the Minister of War's report: Ney replied with fresh vehemence: *'I repeat; you have no other means of salvation but negotiation. You must recall the Bourbons. As for me I will retire to the United States.'*

At these words, Lavalette and Carnot showered the general with reproaches; Ney replied with scorn: *'I am not one of those men for whom self-interest is everything: what would I gain from Louis XVIII's return? To be shot for desertion; but I owe my country the truth.'*

In the session of the Peers of the 23rd, General Drouot, recalling that scene, said: *'I heard with sadness what was said yesterday in diminishment of the glory of our armies, in exaggeration of our disasters and regarding the diminution of our resources. My astonishment was the greater in that those speeches were uttered by a distinguished General (Ney), who by his great courage and military understanding has merited the nation's recognition on so many occasions.'*

In the session on the 22nd, a second storm had erupted after the first: it concerned Bonaparte's abdication; Lucien insisted that his new Emperor be recognized. Monsieur de Pontécoulant interrupted the speaker, and demanded by what right Lucien, a foreigner and a Roman prince, was permitted to select a sovereign for France. 'Why,' he added, *'should we recognize a child who resides in a foreign country?'* At this question, La Bédoyère leapt from his seat: *'I have heard certain of these voices beside the throne of a fortunate Emperor; they distance themselves from him now he has met with misfortune. There are those who would not recognize Napoleon II, because they wish to be ruled by foreigners, to whom they give the name of Allies.'*

*Napoleon's abdication is indivisible. If his son is not to be recognized, he must take up his sword, surrounded by Frenchmen who have shed their blood for him, and who are all still covered with wounds.*

*He will be abandoned by those base generals who have already betrayed him.*

*But if we declare that every Frenchman who deserts his flag shall be covered in infamy, his house razed, his family proscribed, then there will be no more traitors, no more maneuvers that have occasioned the recent catastrophes some of whose authors perhaps are sitting here today.'*

The Chamber rose in tumult: 'Order! Order! Order!' bellowed those wounded by the blow: 'Young man, you forget yourself!' Masséna cried. 'Do you think you are still with the Guards?' said Lameth.



All the omens of the Second Restoration were threatening: Bonaparte had returned at the head of four hundred Frenchmen, Louis XVIII returned behind four hundred thousand foreigners; he passed by Waterloo's sea of blood, to go towards Saint-Denis as if towards his tomb.

It was while the Legitimacy was thus on the march that those shots rang out in the Chamber of Peers: there had been who knows how many terrible revolutionary scenes enacted there in the days of our great evils, when the knife circulated on the benches in the hands of future victims. Various soldiers, whose fatal fascination had led to the ruin of France, by instigating a second invasion of foreigners, struggled on the threshold of the Palace; their prophetic despair, their gestures, their funereal words, seemed to announce a triple death: death for themselves, death for the man they had blessed, death for the race they had proscribed.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 19

Departure from Ghent – Arrival at Mons – I lose the first chance of success in my political career –  
Monsieur de Talleyrand at Mons – A scene with the King – Stupidly, I show an interest in Monsieur de  
Talleyrand

While Bonaparte retired to Malmaison with the Empire in its death throes, we left Ghent with the revitalized monarchy. Pozzo, who knew how little the Legitimacy mattered in high places, hastened to write to Louis XVIII telling him to depart and arrive quickly, if he wanted to reign, before his place was taken: it is to this note that Louis XVIII owed his crown in 1815.

At Mons, I lost my first chance of success in my political career; I was my own worst enemy, and found myself as always to be an obstacle in my way. This time my *good qualities* did me a worse turn than my faults could have done.

Monsieur de Talleyrand, in all the pride of a negotiation which had enriched him, claimed to have rendered the Legitimacy the greatest of services, and returned as master. Astonished that no one has as yet followed the route he had traced in returning to Paris, he was even more discontented at finding Monsieur de Blacas with the King. He regarded Monsieur de Blacas as a scourge of the monarchy; but that was not the real reason for his aversion; he considered Monsieur de Blacas as a favorite, and in consequence a rival; he also feared Monsieur and had been annoyed when, fifteen days earlier, Monsieur had offered him his house by the Lys. Nothing was more natural than for him to ask that Monsieur de Blacas take himself off; to demand it was to recall Bonaparte only too well.

Monsieur de Talleyrand entered Mons at about six in the evening, accompanied by the Abbé Louis: Monsieur de Riccé, Monsieur de Jaucourt and several other table-companions of his flew to meet him. In a mood not seen in him before, the mood of a king who thinks his authority flouted, he refused at first to go to Louis XVIII's residence, replying to those who urged him to do so with this ostentatious comment: *'I am never urged; there will be time tomorrow.'* I went to see him; he came out with all those cajoleries with which he seduced ambitious nobodies and important fools. He took me by the arm, leaning on me while speaking to me: familiarities of high favor, calculated to turn my head, which were absolutely lost on me; I did not even understand them. I invited him to come with me to see the King.

Louis XVIII was in a state of deep sorrow: he was troubled by the separation from Monsieur de Blacas; the latter could not return to France; opinion was aroused against him; even though I had reason to complain of that favorite in Paris, I had not shown any resentment towards him in Ghent. The king was grateful for my conduct; in his tender state he treated me marvelously well. Monsieur de Talleyrand's proposals had already been reported to him: *'He boasts,'* he said, *'of having placed the crown on my head for a second time, and threatens me with taking the road to Germany again: what do you think of that, Monsieur de Chateaubriand?'* I replied: *'Your Majesty has been badly informed; Monsieur de Talleyrand is only tired. If the King consents, I will return to the Minister.'* The King appeared quite relieved; what he liked least was bother; he desired his peace and quiet even at the expense of his affections.

In the midst of his sycophants Monsieur de Talleyrand was worse than ever. I made representation to him that at such a critical moment he could not think of going away. Pozzo preached the same: even though he had not the least inclination towards him, he preferred at that time to see him involved as a former

acquaintance; moreover he thought he was in close favor with the Tsar. I gained no sway over Monsieur de Talleyrand's mind, the Prince's habitués prevented me; Monsieur Mounier even thought that Monsieur de Talleyrand ought to retire. The Abbé Louis, who snapped at everyone, said to me, shaking his muzzle three times: *'If I were the Prince, I wouldn't remain in Mons a quarter of an hour.'* I replied: 'Monsieur l'Abbé, you and I can go wherever we wish; no one will notice; it is not the same for Monsieur de Talleyrand.' I persisted and said to the Prince: *'Are you aware that the King is continuing his journey?'* Monsieur de Talleyrand appeared surprised then he said to me proudly, as the Balafré did to those who had wished to alert him to Henri II's designs: *'He would not dare!'*

I returned to the King's residence where I found Monsieur de Blacas. I said to His Majesty, as an excuse for his Minister's absence, that he was ill, but that he would assuredly have the honor of paying his court to the King the following day. *'As he wishes,'* Louis XVIII replied: *'I am leaving at three'; and then he added these words affectionately; 'I am to be separated from Monsieur de Blacas, the position will be vacant, Monsieur de Chateaubriand.'*

The King's Household was at my feet. No longer burdening himself with Monsieur de Talleyrand, a wise politician would have hitched his horses to the carriage in order to follow or precede the King: I remained stupidly at my inn.

Monsieur de Talleyrand, unable to convince himself that the King would set out, was asleep: at three they woke him to tell him that the King was leaving; he could not believe his ears: *'Tricked! Betrayed!'* he cried. He got up, and there he was, for the first time in his life, in the street at three in the morning, leaning on Monsieur de Riccé's arm. He arrived in front of the King's residence: the two front horses of the team were already half-way through the carriage entrance. A wave of the hand to the coachman to stop; the King asked what was happening; someone called out: *'Sire, it is Monsieur de Talleyrand. – He is asleep'*, said Louis XVIII. – *'Here he is, Sire. – Go on!'* the King replied. The horses and carriage backed up; the door was opened, the King descended, and returned dragging his feet to his apartment, followed by the limping Minister. There Monsieur de Talleyrand began an angry explanation. His Majesty listened and replied: *'Prince de Benevento, are you leaving us? The waters will do you good: you can send us your news.'* The King left the Prince dumbfounded, had himself led back to his Berlin, and departed.

Monsieur de Talleyrand was foaming with anger' Louis XVIII's sang-froid had unseated him: he, Monsieur de Talleyrand, who so often stung others with his calmness, had been beaten on his home ground, dumped in a square in Mons, like the most insignificant of men: he couldn't get over it! He remained silent, watching the departing coach, then grasping the Duc de Lévis by his coat-button: *'Go, Monsieur the Duke, go and tell them how I am treated! I have placed the crown on the King's head once more (he always returned to that crown), and I am going to Germany to begin a fresh emigration.'*

Monsieur de Lévis listening distractedly, dancing on tip-toe, said; *'Prince, I am leaving, there ought to be at least one nobleman with the King.'*

Monsieur de Lévis threw himself into a hired cart carrying the Chancellor of France: the two grandees of the Capetian monarchy went off side by side to rejoin it, half-frozen, in a Merovingian wagon.

I begged Monsieur de Duras to work at reconciliation, and send me news at the earliest. ‘*What!*’ Monsieur de Duras, replied, ‘*you are staying behind after what the King has said to you?*’ Monsieur de Blacas, leaving Mons at his side, thanked me for the interest I had shown towards him.

I found Monsieur de Talleyrand again, embarrassed; he regretted not having followed my advice, and like a muddle-headed sub-lieutenant having refused to go to the King that evening; he feared that agreements would be reached without him, that he would be unable to share political power and profit from the financial conniving which was planned. I told him that, though I disagreed with his views, I would remain no less loyal to him, as an ambassador should to his Minister; that in addition I had friends close to the King, and that I soon hoped to hear some good tidings. Monsieur de Talleyrand felt truly tender, he leant on my shoulder: certainly he thought me a very great man at that instant.

I did not have to wait long to receive a letter from Monsieur de Duras; he wrote to me from Cambrai that everything was arranged, and that Monsieur de Talleyrand would receive the order to set out: this time the Prince did not fail to obey.

What devil possessed me? I had not followed the King who had, so to speak, offered me or rather granted me the Ministry of his Household and who was offended by my obstinacy in staying at Mons: I stuck out my neck for Monsieur de Talleyrand whom I scarcely knew, whom I did not esteem, whom I did not admire; for Monsieur de Talleyrand who would be involved in schemes that were by no means mine, who lived in an atmosphere of corruption in which I could scarcely breathe!

It was from Mons too that the Prince of Benevento, in the midst of all his difficulties, had sent Monsieur de Perray to Naples to get the millions from one of his deals in Vienna. Monsieur de Blacas was travelling at the same moment with the Naples Embassy in his pocket, and other millions which the generous exile of Ghent had given to him at Mons. I was held in good odor by Monsieur de Blacas precisely because everyone detested him; I had incurred Monsieur de Talleyrand’s friendship by my loyalty in his moment of moody caprice; the King had positively summoned me to his side; and I preferred the turpitude of a faithless individual to His Majesty’s favor: it was only right that I should receive, as the reward for my stupidity, being abandoned by everyone, for having wished to be of service to everyone. I returned to France having nothing with which to pay for my journey, while riches poured over the disgraced: I deserved the punishment. It’s a fine thing to wear oneself out as a poor knight when everyone else is armored in gold; yet it is still not necessary to commit enormous errors: if I had remained with the King, the ministerial combination of Talleyrand and Fouché would have been rendered almost impossible; the Restoration would have begun with a moral and honorable ministry, all future options would have been altered. The thoughtlessness that exists in my character deceived me as to the importance of events: most men have the fault of thinking too much of themselves; my fault is in not thinking of myself enough; I cloaked myself in my usual disdain for my own good fortune; I ought to have seen that the fortunes of France were bound up at that instant with those of my little destiny: such historical tangles are very common.

## BOOK XXIII

### CHAPTER 20

From Mons to Gonesse – With Monsieur le Comte Beugnot I oppose Fouché's nomination as a Minister: my reasons – The Duke of Wellington gains the upper hand – Arnouville – Saint-Denis – A last conversation with the King

Leaving Mons at last, I arrived at Cateau-Cambrésis; Monsieur de Talleyrand re-joined me: we looked as though we were there to recreate the Peace Treaty of 1559 between Henri II of France and Philip II of Spain.

At Cambrai, it emerged that the Marquis de La Suze, Marshal of Lodgings à la the age of Fénelon, had disposed of the rooms reserved for Madame de Lévis, Madame de Chateaubriand and I: we stood in the street, amidst the bonfires, the crowd milling around us, and the citizens shouting: '*Long live the King!*' A student, discovering I was there, led us to his mother's house.

Friends of the various monarchies of France began to appear; they came to Cambrai not to join *the league against Venice*, but to combine against the new constitution; they hastened to lay at the King's feet their successive loyalties and their hatred for the Charter: a passport they judged necessary to get closer to *Monsieur*; I and two or three other reasonable Gilles, we already smelt like Jacobins.

On the 28th of June, the Proclamation of Cambrai appeared. The King said in it: '*I only wish to banish from my presence those men whose reputation is a subject of pain to France and dread to Europe.*' Now, the name of Fouché was pronounced with gratitude by the Pavillon Marsan! The king laughed at his brother's new passion and said: '*It has not come to him by divine inspiration.*'

In Book IV of these *Memoirs* I have told you that in passing through Cambrai after the Hundred Days, I searched in vain for the lodgings I occupied in my days with the Navarre Regiment, and the café I frequented with La Martinière; all had vanished with my youth.

From Cambrai, we went to stay at Roye: the innkeeper's wife took Madame de Chateaubriand for Madame la Dauphine; she was led in triumph to a room where there was a table set for thirty: the room, lit by candles, tapers and a large fire, was suffocating. The hostess wished to receive no payment, and said to her: '*I consider myself at fault for not having found a way of dying on behalf of our monarchy*' It was the last spark of that fire which animated the French for so many centuries.

General Lamothe, Monsieur Laborie's brother-in-law, arrived, sent by the authorities in the capital, to inform us that it would be impossible for us to present ourselves in Paris without the tricolor cockade. Monsieur de Lafayette and the other Commissioners, having been very badly received by the Allies elsewhere, went cap in hand from one headquarters to another, begging the foreigners for a master of some kind for France: any king, even one chosen by Cossacks, was fine, provided he was not descended from Saint Louis or Louis XIV.

At Roye, a council was held: Monsieur de Talleyrand had two old nags harnessed to his carriage and drove to His Majesty's. His equipage occupied the whole breadth of the square, from the Minister's inn to the King's door. He descended from his chariot with a memoir which he read to us: he considered the policy which would have to be adopted on arrival; he ventured a few words on the necessity of allowing

everyone, indiscriminately, to participate in the appointments to be made; he took it as understood that it would even extend, generously, to those who had judged Louis XVI. His Majesty flushed, and striking both hands on the arms of his chair, cried: '*Never!*' A never lasting twenty-four hours.

At Senlis, we presented ourselves at a canon's house: his servant received us like dogs; as for the canon, who was not St. Rieul patron saint of the town, he only wished to avoid seeing us. His maid had orders not to render us any service other than to sell us whatever we wished to eat, for money: the Génie du Christianisme counted for nothing. Yet Senlis ought to have provided us with a good omen, since it was there that Henri IV escaped from the hands of his gaolers in 1576: '*I only regret,*' wrote the King, a compatriot of Montaigne, after escaping, '*two things that I have left behind in Paris: the mass and my wife.*'

From Senlis we travelled to Philippe-Auguste's cradle, otherwise known as Gonesse. Approaching the town, we saw two men advancing towards us; they were Marshal Macdonald and my faithful friend Hyde de Neuville. They stopped our carriage and asked us where Monsieur de Talleyrand was; they quickly gave me to understand that they were looking for him in order to inform the King that His Majesty must not dream of entering the gates of Paris without having adopted Fouché as a Minister. Anxiety gripped me, since, despite the manner in which Louis XVII had made his decision at Roye, I was not totally reassured. I questioned the Marshal: '*What! Monsieur le Maréchal,*' I said, '*is it certain that we cannot enter except under such harsh conditions?*' – '*Faith,*' Monsieur le Vicomte,' the Marshal replied, '*I am not so convinced of it.*'

The King stopped at Gonesse for two hours. I left Madame de Chateaubriand in the middle of the main street in her carriage, and went to the council meeting at the town hall. There a discussion took place on which depended the future fate of the monarchy. The discussion began: I maintained, with only Monsieur Beugnot's support, that Louis XVIII should not admit Monsieur Fouché to his council under any circumstances. The King listened: I saw that personally he would have stuck to his words at Roye; but he was dominated by Monsieur, and urged on by the Duke of Wellington.

In a chapter of La Monarchie selon la Charte, I summarized the reasons I put forward at Gonesse. I was inspired; the spoken word has a power which is lost to the written word: '*Wherever there is a public forum,*' I said in that chapter, '*whoever may be exposed to reproaches of a certain nature cannot be placed in charge of Government. There have been certain speeches, certain words, which would oblige a like Minister to hand in his resignation and leave the Chamber. It is that unacceptability resulting from the principles of free and representative government that cannot be confirmed if all illusions combine to carry a well-known individual to Ministerial power, despite the only too well-founded repugnance of the Crown. The elevation of this man will produce one of two results: either the abolition of the Charter, or the fall of the Minister when the session opens. Imagine the Minister of whom I speak listening, in the Chamber of Deputies, to the debate of the 21st of January, able to be harangued at every moment by some deputy from Lyons, and threatened continually with a terrible Tu es ille vir! (Thou art the man!) Men of this sort can only be employed, ostensibly, among the mutes of Bajazet's Seraglio or the mutes of Bonaparte's Legislature.' I said: '*What will become of the Minister if a deputy, mounting to the rostrum, Moniteur in hand, reads the report of the Convention of the 9th of August 1795; if he demands the expulsion of Fouché as unworthy by virtue of that report which drove him out, he Fouché (I cite the text),**

like a thief and a terrorist, whose atrocious and criminal conduct would bring dishonour and opprobrium on every assembly of which he might become a member?’

These are the things they had chosen to forget!

After all that were they so wretched as to believe that a man of that kind could ever be of benefit? He needed to be left behind the scenes, to meditate on his sad experiences; but to do violence to the Crown and public opinion, to summon bare-facedly such a Minister to office, a man whom Bonaparte, at that very moment, treated as vile, was that not to declare a renunciation of liberty and virtue? Is the Crown worth such a sacrifice? It no longer had the power to banish anyone: who could one banish having accepted Fouché?

The parties acted without considering the form of government they had adopted; everyone spoke of the constitution, liberty, equality, the rights of nations, and no one wanted any of it; fashionable verbiage: they asked, without thinking about it, for news of the Charter, while all hoping it would soon die. Liberals and Royalists inclined towards absolute government, modified by custom: it is the French temperament and style. Material interests dominated; they had no wish to renounce, they said, what they had done during the Revolution; each was responsible for his own life and intended to charge his neighbor with his: wrong-doing, they assured us, had become an element of public life, which from now on was a factor in government, and penetrated society like a vital principle.

My whim, in supporting a Charter directed by religious and moral action, was the source of the ill will certain parties bore towards me: as far as the Royalists were concerned, I loved liberty too much; to the Revolutionaries, I was someone who spurned their crimes too obviously. If, to my great detriment, I had not happened to be there to make myself master of the Constitutionalist school, the Ultras and the Jacobins would, from the start, have stuffed the Charter into the pockets of their morning-coats decorated with *fleur-de-lys*, or their carmagnoles à la Cassius.

Monsieur de Talleyrand did not like Monsieur Fouché; Monsieur Fouché detested and, what is stranger, despised Monsieur Talleyrand: it was difficult to be successful that way. Monsieur de Talleyrand, who had at first been content not to be coupled with Monsieur Fouché, feeling that it was inevitable, gave his support to the project; he did not realize that given the Charter (especially if he were united with the man who bombarded Lyons) there was hardly a credible position any longer for Fouché.

What I had predicted was quickly born out: no advantage would accrue from the admission of the Duke of Otranto, it would receive only opprobrium; the mere shadow of the Chambers being imminent sufficed to make Ministers who were too exposed to the freedom of the rostrum, vanish.

My opposition was useless: according to the custom of weak characters, the King rose from the session with nothing agreed; the decree was to be decided at the Château d’Arnouville.

No proper council was held in this latter residence; the intimates and affiliates alone met in secret. Monsieur de Talleyrand, having arrived before us, spoke to his friends. The Duke of Wellington arrived; I saw him pass in a barouche; the feathers in his hat waving in the air; he had come to bestow Monsieur Fouché and Monsieur Talleyrand on France, a twofold gift which the victor of Waterloo was granting to our country. When it was suggested to him that the Duke of Otranto’s regicide might perhaps be a drawback, he replied: ‘*That’s a mere detail.*’ An Irish Protestant, a British General foreign to our way of

life and our history, a mind which saw in the France of 1793 only its English antecedent of 1649, was charged with deciding our fate! Bonaparte's ambition had brought us to this wretched state.

I roamed alone through the gardens from which the Controller General Machault, at the age of ninety-three, went to die in the Madelonnettes; since at that time death in his grand review forgot no one. I was no longer summoned; the familiarities of mutual misfortune had ceased between sovereign and subject: the King was preparing to enter his palace, I my retreat. The void reforms around monarchs as soon as they regain power. I rarely traversed the silent uninhabited halls of the Tuileries that brought me to the King's bureau, without serious reflection: to me, only deserts of another sort, infinite solitudes where worlds themselves vanish before God, are real.

We lacked bread at Arnouville; without an officer of the name of Dubourg, driven from Ghent along with us, we would have starved. Monsieur Dubourg went foraging; he brought us, in flight, a shoulder of mutton from the Mayor's residence. If the Mayor's servant, a heroine from Beauvais alone there, had possessed any weapons, she would have received us like Jeanne Hachette.

We went on to Saint-Denis: along both sides of the road stretched the bivouacs of the Prussians and English; the spires of the Abbey could be seen far off: into its foundations Dagobert hurled his jewels, within its vaults successive dynasties buried their kings and great men; four months earlier we had deposited the bones of Louis XVI there to replace the dust of his predecessors. When I returned from my first exile in 1800, I had crossed this same plain of Saint-Denis; as yet only Napoleon's soldiers were camped there; Frenchmen were yet again replacing the old bands of the Constable de Montmorency.

A baker housed us. At nine in the evening, I went to pay my court to the King. His Majesty was lodged in the Abbey buildings: it was all anyone could do to prevent the little girls of the Legion of Honor from shouting: '*Long Live Napoleon!*' I went into the church first; a piece of wall next to the cloister had fallen: the ancient Abbey Church was lit by a single lamp. I said my prayers at the entrance to the vault into which I had seen Louis XVI lowered: full of fear as to the future, I do not know if I have ever felt my heart flooded by a more profound and religious sadness. Next I took myself to His Majesty's: shown into one of the rooms leading to that of the King, I found no one there; I sat in a corner and waited. Suddenly a door opened: silently Vice entered leaning on the arm of Crime, Monsieur de Talleyrand walking in supported by Monsieur Fouché; the infernal vision passed slowly before me, penetrated to the King's room, and vanished. Fouché had come to swear fealty and do homage to his lord; the faithful regicide, on his knees, laid the hands which caused Louis XVI's head to fall, between the hands of the Royal Martyr's brother; the apostate bishop went surety for the oath.

On the following day, the Faubourg Saint-Germain arrived: all things were confounded in Fouché's nomination which had already been achieved, religion with impiety, virtue with vice, royalist with revolutionary, foreigner with Frenchman; on every side the cry went up; '*Without Fouché there is no security for the King, without Fouché there is no security for France; he alone has already saved the country, he alone can finish the job.*' The old Duchesse de Duras was one of the most animated singers of the hymn; the Bailli de Crussol, a survivor of Malta, made up the chorus; he declared that if his head was still on his shoulders, it was because Monsieur Fouché had allowed it. The timorous had received such a fright under Napoleon they took the perpetrator of the massacre at Lyons for a new Titus. For more than three months the salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain considered me a miscreant because I disapproved of the nomination of their Ministers. Those poor wretches, they prostrated themselves at the feet of



parvenus; they gossiped as ever about their nobility, their hatred for revolutionaries, their unfailing loyalty, the inflexibility of their principles, and they adored Fouché!

Fouché had realized the incompatibility between his ministerial existence and the play of representative monarchy: as he could not involve himself with the elements of legal government, he tried to render the political elements compatible with his own nature. He created an artificial Terror; assuming imaginary dangers, he intended to force the Crown to acknowledge Bonaparte's two Chambers and receive the declaration of rights which was hurriedly perfected; several words were even muttered concerning the necessity of exiling Monsieur and his sons: the masterwork would have been to isolate the King.

People continued to be taken in: the National Guard traversed the walls of Paris, in vain, to come and protest their devotion; we were assured that the Guard was ill-disposed towards us. The faction had closed the gates in order to prevent the people, who had remained loyal during the Hundred Days, from rushing through, and it was asserted that the people had threatened to kill Louis XVIII as he passed by. The blindness of it all was amazing, since the French Army had withdrawn to the Loire, five hundred thousand Allies occupied the positions around the capital, and yet it was continually claimed that the King was not powerful enough to enter a city where not one soldier remained, where there were only citizens left, quite capable of containing a handful of Federalists, if they had stirred into life. Unfortunately the King, through a series of fatal coincidences, appeared to be the leader of the English and Prussians; he thought he was surrounded by liberators, and he was accompanied by enemies; he appeared to be encircled by a guard of honor, and that guard was only in reality made up of policemen who would conduct him from his kingdom: he only crossed Paris in the company of foreigners the memory of whom would serve one day as a pretext for banishing his race.

The Provisional Government formed since Bonaparte's abdication was dissolved by a kind of act of prosecution lodged against the Crown: a foundation stone on which they hoped to construct a new revolution one day.

At the First Restoration I was of the opinion that they should have kept the tricolor cockade: it shone in all its glory; the white cockade was forgotten; retaining the colors which had legitimized so many victories, did not imply readying an emblem to rally around in some anticipated revolution. Not to adopt the white cockade would have been wise; to abandon it even though it had now been worn by Bonaparte's grenadiers was cowardice: one cannot pass the Caudine Forks with impunity; what dishonors is fatal: a slap in the face does you no lasting physical harm, and yet it may kill you.

Before leaving Saint-Denis, I was received by the King, and had the following conversation with him:

‘Well?’ said Louis XVIII, opening the dialogue with this exclamation. – ‘Well, Sire, you have decided on the Duke of Otranto?’

– *It was essential: from my brother down to the Bailli de Crussol (and he is above suspicion), everyone said we could not do otherwise: what do you think?*

– *Sire, the thing is done: I ask Your Majesty's permission to say nothing.*

– *No, no, speak: you know how I have resisted it since leaving Ghent.*

– *Sire, I am only obeying your command; pardon my loyalty: I think the monarchy is done for.*’

The King remained silent; I was beginning to tremble at my boldness, when His Majesty continued:

– ‘*Well, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, I am of your opinion.*’

This conversation concludes my account of the Hundred Days.

**End of Book XXIII**

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 1

#### Bonaparte at Malmaison – Universal desertion

If a man were suddenly transported from life's most clamorous scenes to the silent shores of the icy ocean, he would experience what I experience beside Napoleon's tomb, since we are now, in an instant, beside that tomb.

Leaving Paris on the 25th of June, Napoleon awaited at Malmaison the moment of his departure from France. I return to him there: I shall not leave him, revisiting past days, and anticipating the future, until after his death.

Malmaison, where the Emperor stayed, was empty. Joséphine was dead; Bonaparte found himself alone in that retreat. There his good fortune had begun; there he had been happy; there he had become intoxicated with the incense of the world; there, from the heart of that tomb, had issued orders which shook the world. In those gardens, where the feet of the mob had once scarred the sandy paths, grass and brambles grew green; I discovered this when walking there. Already, for want of attention, the exotic trees were pining away; the black Australian swans no longer glided along the canals; the aviary no longer caged its tropical birds: they had flown away to await their host in their native land.

Bonaparte was able to find matter for consolation however in turning his gaze back on his early days: fallen kings grieve above all because they still perceive the hereditary splendor and the pomp of their cradles that preceded their fall: but what could Napoleon discover ante-dating his prosperity: a nursery crib in a Corsican village? Grown more magnanimous in doffing his purple mantle, he should have donned with pride the goatherd's smock; but men never conceive of themselves in the humble surroundings from which they originated; it seems that an unjust heaven deprives them of their patrimony when the lottery of fate forces them to lose what they have gained, and moreover Napoleon's grandeur arose from what issued from himself: none of his race had preceded him in preparing the road to power.

At the sight of those abandoned gardens, those uninhabited rooms, those galleries faded from entertainments, those rooms in which music and song had ceased, Napoleon could review his career: he could ask himself whether a little more moderation might have maintained his happiness. They were not foreigners and enemies who were banishing him now; he was not going away a quasi-victor, leaving the nations lost in admiration of his passage, after that prodigious campaign of 1814; he was retiring defeated. Frenchmen, his friends, were urging his immediate abdication, pressing him to depart, not desiring him to remain even as a general, sending him courier after courier, obliging him to quit the soil over which he had poured glory as much as suffering.

To this harsh lesson were added other warnings: the Prussians were on the prowl in the neighborhood of Malmaison: Blücher, reeling about drunkenly, ordered them to seize and *hang* that conqueror who had dared to *set his foot on the necks of kings*. The rising fortunes, vulgarity of manners, speed of elevation, and degree of abasement of modern men will, I fear, deny our times the nobility we find in history: Greece and Rome did not talk of hanging Alexander or Caesar.

The scenes which had taken place in 1814 were repeated in 1815, but with something more offensive about them, because the ingrates were moved by fear: they had to get rid of Napoleon quickly; the Allies were arriving; Alexander was not there initially, to temper the sense of triumph and curb the insolence of victory; Paris was no longer adorned with its sacred inviolability, that first invasion had profaned the sanctuary; it was no longer God's wrath that was falling upon us, it was Heaven's scorn: the lightning-bolt had extinguished itself.

All the cowards had acquired a fresh degree of malignity during the Hundred Days; affecting, through love of country, to rise above personal attachments, they cried out that Bonaparte had been only too criminal in violating the treaties of 1814. But the true culprits, were they not those who had supported his plans? If, in 1815, having deserted him once and in order to desert him again, instead of re-creating his armies, they had said to him, after he had taken up residence in the Tuileries: 'Your genius is in error; opinion is no longer with you; take pity on France. Retire, after this last visit to our soil; go and live among Washington's citizens. Who knows if the Bourbons will not prove to be a mistake? Who knows if one day France will not turn its gaze towards you, at a time when, in the school of liberty, you shall have learnt respect for its laws? You may return then, not as a raptor swooping on its prey, but as a great citizen, the pacifier of his country.'

They did not use that language to him: they gave full reign to their passions; they helped to blind him, certain they would profit from his victory or his defeat. His soldiers alone died for Napoleon with an admirable sincerity; the rest were no more than a grazing herd, fattening themselves to right and left. If only the Viziers of the despoiled Caliph had been content to turn their back on him! But no: they profited from his final moments; they overwhelmed him with sordid demands; all wished to make money out of his poverty.

There was never such a complete desertion; Bonaparte was responsible for it: insensible to others' troubles, the world repaid him with indifference for indifference. Like most despots, he was good to his servants; at heart he cared for no one: a solitary man, he was self-sufficient; misfortune merely returned him to the wilderness that was his life.

When I gather my memories together, when I recall having seen Washington in his little house in Philadelphia, and Bonaparte in his palace, it seems to me that Washington, retiring to the fields of Virginia, cannot have experienced the regrets that Bonaparte experienced, awaiting exile in the gardens at Malmaison. Nothing had changed in the life of the former; he returned to his modest habits; he had not elevated himself above the happiness of the ploughmen he had liberated; but everything in the life of the latter was overthrown.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 2

#### Departure from Malmaison – Rambouillet – Rochefort

Napoleon left Malmaison accompanied by Generals Bertrand, Rovigo, and Beker, the latter acting in the capacity of warder or commissary. On the way, he was seized with a desire to stop at Rambouillet. He left it, to embark at Rochefort, as Charles X had, to embark at Cherbourg; Rambouillet, the inglorious retreat where all that was greatest in men or their race was eclipsed; the fatal place where Francois I died; where Henri III, escaping from the barricades, slept booted and spurred; where Louis XVI left his shadow behind! How fortunate Louis, Napoleon, and Charles would have been, if they had merely been humble shepherds of the flocks at Rambouillet!

Arriving in Rochefort, Napoleon hesitated: the Executive commission sent out peremptory orders: ‘*The garrisons of Rochefort and La Rochelle*,’ said these dispatches, ‘*must use main force to ensure Napoleon takes ship...make him go...his services cannot be accepted.*’

Napoleon’s services could not be accepted! And had you not accepted his gifts and his chains? Napoleon did not go away; he was driven off: and by whom?

Bonaparte had only believed in good fortune; he gave no thought to misfortune; he absolved the ungrateful in advance: a just retribution made him submit to his own system. When success ceased to animate his person and became incarnate in another individual, the disciples abandoned the master to follow the school. If I, who believe in the legitimacy of gifts and the sovereignty of misfortune, had served Bonaparte, I would not have left him; I would have proved to him, by my loyalty, the falsity of his political principles; while sharing his disgrace, I would have remained at his side, a living contradiction to his sterile doctrines and the worthlessness of the rule of prosperity.

Since the 1st of July, frigates had been waiting for him in the Rochefort roads: hopes which never die, memories inseparable from a final farewell, detained him. How he must have regretted his childhood days when his serene gaze had not yet seen the first raindrops fall! He gave the English fleet time to approach. He could still have embarked on one of two luggers which were due to join a Danish ship at sea (this was the course adopted by his brother Joseph); but his resolution failed him as he gazed at the coast of France. He had an aversion for Republics; the liberty and equality espoused by the United States was repugnant to him. He was inclined to demand asylum of the English: ‘*What disadvantage do you see in that course?*’ he asked those he consulted. – ‘*The disadvantage of dishonoring you*’, a naval officer replied: ‘*You must not fall into the hands of the English, dead or alive. They will have you stuffed and exhibit you at a shilling a head.*’

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 3

Bonaparte takes refuge with the English fleet – He writes to the Prince Regent

Despite these comments, the Emperor resolved to give himself up to his conquerors. On the 13th of July, Louis XVIII having already been in Paris five days, Napoleon sent the captain of the English ship Bellerophon the following letter, addressed to the Prince Regent:

*‘Royal Highness,*

*Prey to the factions which are dividing my country, and the enmity of the greatest powers of Europe, I have ended my political career, and I come, like Themistocles, to ‘sit at the hearth’ of the British people. I place myself under the protection of their laws, which I ask of Your Royal Highness as the most powerful, most constant and most generous of my enemies.*

*Rochefort, the 13th of July, 1815.’*

If Bonaparte had not for twenty years heaped outrage upon the English people, their government, their King and the King’s heir, one might be able to find some propriety of tone in this letter; but how had this Royal Highness, so despised and insulted by Napoleon, suddenly become the most *powerful*, most *constant*, and most *generous* of enemies, merely by being victorious? Napoleon could not have been convinced of what he was saying: and these days what is not true is not eloquent. The phrases that reveal the fact of fallen greatness addressing itself to an enemy are fine; the banal example of Themistocles is superfluous.

There is something worse than a lack of sincerity in the step Bonaparte took; there is a lack of consideration for France: the Emperor was pre-occupied only by his personal disaster; when the fall came, we no longer counted for anything in his eyes. Without reflecting that in giving England the preference over America, his choice represented an insult to national grief, he solicited asylum from a government that, for twenty years, had paid Europe to fight against us, from a government whose Commissioner with the Russian Army, General Wilson, had urged Kutuzov, during the retreat from Moscow, to finish us off completely: the English, fortunate in the final battle, were camped in the Bois de Boulogne. Go then, Themistocles, and sit quietly by the British hearth, while the earth has not yet finished drinking the French blood shed for you at Waterloo! What part would the fugitive have played, if he had been entertained on the banks of the Thames, with France invaded, and Wellington dictator of the Louvre? Napoleon’s noble fate served him better: the English allowing themselves to be drawn into a short-sighted and spiteful policy lacked a final triumph; instead of humiliating their supplicant by admitting him to their castles and their banquets, they rendered the crown they thought they had taken from him brighter for posterity. He grew greater in his captivity by virtue of the fear instilled in all the Powers: in vain the Ocean enchained him, Europe in arms camped on the shore, her gaze fixed on the sea.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 4

Bonaparte aboard the *Bellerephon* – Torbay – The Act confining Bonaparte to St Helena – He transfers to the *Northumberland* and sets sail

On the 15th of July, the *Épervier* conveyed Bonaparte to the *Bellerephon*. The French boat was so small that, from the deck of the English vessel, they could not see the giant riding the waves. The Emperor, accosting Captain *Maitland*, said: '*I come to place myself under the protection of the laws of England.*' For once at least the contemner of the laws admitted their authority.

The fleet sailed for *Torbay*: a host of ships cruised around the *Bellerephon*; the same excitement was shown at Plymouth. On the 30th of July, Lord Keith notified the supplicant of the act which confined him to *St Helena*: '*That is worse than Tamerlane's cage,*' Napoleon said.

This violation of the rights of man, and of respect for hospitality, was disgusting: if you first see the light of day on *any* ship, provided it is *under sail*, you are English born; by virtue of the age-old customs of London, the *waves* are considered *the soil of Albion*. And yet an English ship was not an inviolable altar for a suppliant, it did not place the great man who embraced the *Bellerephon*'s stern under the protection of the British trident! Bonaparte protested; he argued points of law, spoke of treachery and perfidy, and appealed to the future: yet had he not, in his might, trampled underfoot the sacred things whose guardianship he now invoked? Had he not carried off *Toussaint-Louverture* and the *King of Spain*? Had he not had English travellers, who happened to be in France at the time of the breaking of the *Peace of Amiens*, arrested and imprisoned for years? It was permissible therefore for mercantile England to imitate what he had done himself, and inflict an ignoble reprisal; but she could have acted differently. Civil rights and the rights of man were violated in the person of the *Duc d'Enghien*; yet the heroic race of the *Condés* never claimed a drop of blood from the immortal soldier on his defeat. *Monsieur Dupin*'s letter makes known to us the generosity of the unfortunate *Duc de Bourbon* regarding his son's remains. (See Book Sixteen of these *Memoirs*.)

Napoleon's heart did not match his head in greatness; his quarrels with the English are deplorable; they revolted *Lord Byron*. How could he deign to honor his gaolers with even a word? It is painful to see him stoop to verbose conflicts with Lord Keith at Torbay, and with *Sir Hudson Lowe* at St Helena, issuing memos because they break faith with him, quibbling about a title, or a little more or less gold or honors. Bonaparte confined to himself, was confined to his glory, and that ought to have sufficed: he had nothing to ask of men; he failed to treat adversity despotically enough; one could have forgiven him for making a last slave of fortune. I find nothing remarkable in his protest against the violation of the laws of hospitality except the place and signature attached to that protest: '*On board the Bellerephon, at sea: Napoleon.*' The harmonies of immensity are at play there.

From the *Bellerephon*, Bonaparte was transferred to the *Northumberland*. Two frigates burdened with the future garrison of St Helena escorted him. Some of the officers of that garrison had fought at *Waterloo*. This explorer of the globe was allowed to have with him *Monsieur* and *Madame Bertrand*, and the Messieurs de *Montholon*, *Gourgaud*, and *de Las Cases*, willing and generous passengers on a submerged plank. According to an article in the Captain's instructions, *Bonaparte was to be disarmed*: Napoleon alone, prisoner on a vessel, in the midst of the Ocean, *disarmed*! What magnificent terror his power

invoked! But what a lesson of Heaven's to men who abuse the sword! The stupid Admiralty treated like a Botany-Bay felon this grand convict of the human race: did the Black Prince disarm King Jean?

The squadron weighed anchor. Since the boat that carried Caesar, no vessel has been burdened with a like destiny. Bonaparte drew near to that sea of miracles over which the Arabs of Sinai had seen him pass. The last Napoleon saw of the French coast was Cape la Hague; scene of another English victory.

The Emperor was mistaken as to the degree of interest in him, when he expressed the desire to remain in Europe; he would soon have become merely a commonplace, withered prisoner: his old role was finished. But the new location carried him to fresh fame, beyond that role. No man of similar renown has had a like end to Napoleon's. He was not, as after his first fall, proclaimed the autocrat of a few iron and marble quarries, the former to provide him with a sword, the latter a bust; eagle that he was they gave him a rock, on the point of which he remained in the sunlight until his death, in full view of the whole world.



## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 5

#### An assessment of Bonaparte

At the instant when Bonaparte is leaving Europe, abandoning life in order to seek his destined death, it is appropriate to examine this man of dual existence, to portray the true Napoleon and the false: they blend and form a whole, in their mixing of reality and myth. I ask you to bear in mind what I have previously said about the man, in speaking about the death of the Duc d'Enghien, in showing him in action in Europe before, during and after the Russian Campaign; and in giving an account of my pamphlet '*De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*'. The parallel drawn with Washington in the sixth book of these *Memoirs* also throws some light on Napoleon's character.

From the combination of these observations, it can be seen that Bonaparte was a poet in action, an immense genius in warfare, an indefatigable, able and intelligent mind where administration was concerned, a thorough and rational legislator. That is why he has such a hold on the popular imagination, and such authority over the decisions of practical men. But as a politician he will always appear deficient in the eyes of Statesmen. This observation, made inadvertently by most of his panegyrists, will, I am convinced, become the definitive judgement regarding him; it explains the contrast between his prodigious efforts and their pitiful results. At St Helena, he himself severely condemned his political activity in two regards: the War in Spain and the War in Russia; he might have broadened his confession to include other sins. His admirers will surely not maintain that he was wrong when blaming himself? Let us recapitulate:

Bonaparte acted in defiance of all prudence, without yet again speaking of the odiousness of the deed, in killing the Duc d'Enghien: he attached a burden to his life. Despite his puerile apologists, that death, as we have seen, was the hidden catalyst of the discord which subsequently broke out between Alexander and Napoleon, as also between Prussia and France.

The assault on Spain was wholly improper: the Peninsula belonged to the Emperor; he could have turned it to the most profitable account: instead, he made it a training-ground for English soldiers, and the cause of his own destruction through a nation's rebellion.

The detention of the Pope, and the annexation of the Papal States by France, were tyrannical whims by which he lost the advantage of passing for a restorer of religion.

Bonaparte did not halt, as he should have done, once he had married a daughter of the Caesars: Russia and England were appealing for mercy.

He did not revive Poland, when the security of Europe depended upon re-establishing that kingdom.

He hurled himself at Russia despite the representations of his Generals and counsellors.

Madness having set in, he went on beyond Smolensk; everyone told him that he ought not go further at a first attempt, that his first Campaign in the North was over and a second (he felt it himself) would make him master of the Empire of the Tsars.

He was incapable of computing the days or foreseeing the effect of the climate, things everyone in Moscow computed and foresaw. Read too what I wrote regarding the *Continental Blockade* and the *Confederation of the Rhine*; the first a vast concept, but a dubious act; the second a considerable achievement but spoilt in execution by a campaign mentality and monetary instincts. Napoleon received as a gift the old French monarchy as it had been created by the centuries and by an uninterrupted succession of great men, as Louis XIV's majesty and Louis XV's alliances had left it, as the Republic had enlarged it. He seated himself on that magnificent pedestal, stretched out his arms, seized hold of nations, and gathered them round him; but he lost Europe as swiftly as he had won it; he twice brought the Allies to Paris, despite the miracles of his military intelligence. He had the world at his feet and all he earned from it was a prison for himself, exile for his family, and the loss of all his conquests plus a measure of the former French territories.

That is history, demonstrated by facts which no one can dispute. Where did the errors I have just indicated stem from; errors followed by so speedy and fatal a collapse? They stemmed from Napoleon's inadequacies as a politician.

In his alliances he enslaved other governments by conceding territory, whose borders he would soon alter; constantly showing a tendency to take back what he had given, always making himself felt as the oppressor; re-organizing nothing after his invasions, with the exception of Italy. Instead of halting after each step, to build up behind him, in another form, what he had overthrown, he continued to advance through the ruins: he travelled so quickly he barely had time to take breath wherever he passed. If, by some kind of Treaty of Westphalia, he could have ordered and assured the existence of the various States within Germany, Prussia and Poland, then, on his first retrograde march, he could have fallen back on settled populations and found shelter among them. But his poetic edifice of victories, lacking a foundation, and only suspended in air by his genius, fell when his genius began to fail. The Macedonian founded Empires at the double, Bonaparte, as he ran, only knew how to destroy; his sole aim was to be master of the world in his own person, without worrying about how to preserve it.

People have wished to make Bonaparte appear as a perfect being, the type of feeling, sensitivity, morality and justice, a writer like Caesar or Thucydides, an orator or historian like Demosthenes or Tacitus. Napoleon's public speeches, his words from council chamber or tent are less inspired by prophetic breath than by announcements of unaccomplished catastrophe. While the Isaiah of the sword himself has vanished, his prophecies regarding Nineveh which dogged States without touching or destroying them remain puerile rather than sublime. Bonaparte in truth was Destiny for sixteen years: Destiny is silent, and Bonaparte ought to have been so. Bonaparte was no Caesar; his education was neither learned nor select; half a foreigner, he was ignorant of the basic rules of our language: what did it matter, after all, if his speech was faulty? He issued orders to the world. His bulletins have the eloquence of victory. Sometimes, intoxicated with success, men affected to embroider them on a drum; in the midst of gloomy tones there rose fatal bursts of laughter. I have read carefully what Bonaparte wrote, his first childish manuscripts, his novels, then his pamphlets in letter form to Buttafuoco, *le Souper de Beaucaire*, his private letters to Josephine, his five volumes of speeches, his orders and bulletins, and his unpublished dispatches ruined by the editing carried out by Monsieur de Talleyrand's office. I know a lot about it: I only recently discovered, in a vile autograph copy left on the Island of Elba, various thoughts which echo the nature of the great islander:

*'My heart rejects familiar joys as it does commonplace sorrows.'*

*'Not having given myself life, I will not deprive myself of it, as long as it demands something fine of me.'*

*'My evil genius appeared and announced my end, which I met at Leipzig.'*

*'I have conjured the terrible spirit of novelty which traverses the world.'*

Something of the true Bonaparte is certainly captured there.

If Bonaparte's bulletins, speeches, allocutions, and proclamations are distinguished by energy, that energy does not truly belong to him; it was of the age, it derived from revolutionary inspiration which weakened in Bonaparte, because he marched in opposition to that inspiration. Danton said: *'Metal seethes; if you don't keep an eye on the furnace you'll get burnt.'* Saint-Just said: *'Dare!'* That word contains all of our Revolutionary politics; those who make half-revolutions only dig a grave for themselves.

Are Bonaparte's bulletins nobler than this proud phrase-making?

As for the numerous volumes published under the title of *Memoirs of St Helena, Napoleon in Exile* etc., etc., etc., those documents, received from Bonaparte's lips, or dictated by him to various people, have a few fine passages on warfare, a few remarkable assessments of certain men; but in the end Napoleon is only concerned with creating his apology, justifying his past, building, on nascent ideas and completed events, things which he never dreamed of during the course of those events. In that compilation, where *for* and *against* succeed one another, where each opinion finds a favorable authority and a peremptory refutation, it is difficult to untangle that which belongs to Napoleon and that which belongs to his secretaries. It is probable that he produced a different version for each of them, so that his readers might choose according to their taste, and create in future any Napoleon they wished. He dictated his history such as he wished to leave it; he was an author writing articles about his own work. Nothing then is more absurd than to go into raptures over this collection from many hands, which is not like Caesar's *Commentaries* a short work, emerging from a great mind, composed by a superior writer; and yet those brief commentaries, so Asinius Pollio thought, were neither exact nor faithful. The *Memorial de Saint-Hélène* is fine, written throughout with candor and naïve admiration.

One of the things which most contributed to rendering Napoleon detestable in his lifetime, was his penchant for degrading everything: in a burning town, he coupled decrees regarding the re-establishment of theatres, with orders suppressing monarchies; a parody of the omnipotence of God, who rules the fate of the world and of an ant. With the fall of empires he mingled insults to women; he took pleasure in the abasement of what he had brought down; he slandered and injured especially whoever dared to resist him. His arrogance equaled his good fortune; he thought himself all the greater for dragging others down. Jealous of his generals, he accused them of his own faults, since as far as he was concerned he had no flaws. Contemptuous of all people of merit, he reproached them harshly for their mistakes. He would not have said, as Louis XIV did to Marshal Villeroi, after the disaster of Ramillies: *'Monsieur le Maréchal, at our age one is never fortunate.'* A touching magnanimity, that was unknown to Napoleon. The age of Louis XIV was created by Louis the Great: his own age made Bonaparte.

The Emperor's history, modified by false accounts, was distorted even further by the state of society in the Imperial epoch. Every Revolution reported by a free Press enables the facts to be seen in depth, since

everyone describes them as they see them: Cromwell's reign is known about, because people told the Protector what they thought about his actions and his person. In France, even under the Republic, despite the inexorable censure of the executioner, truth emerged; the same faction was not always victorious; each succumbed quickly, and the succeeding faction informed you as to what its precursor had hidden from you: between one scaffold and another, between two severed heads, there was freedom. But when Bonaparte seized power, and speech was gagged, and only the voice of despotism was heard which never spoke except in praise of itself and allowed discussion of nothing but itself, truth vanished.

The authentic pieces, so-called, from that time are corrupt: nothing was published, neither books nor newspapers, except at the master's bidding: Bonaparte watched over the *Moniteur* articles; his Prefects sent back citations, congratulations, and felicitations from the various departments as the authorities in Paris had dictated and transmitted them, expressing public opinion as it was agreed to be, quite different from that opinion in actuality. Write history using these same documents! As proof of the impartiality of your material, evaluate the authenticity of what you have drawn on: you will be quoting only lies based on lies.

If one casts doubt on this universal deception, if men who saw nothing of the days of the Empire insist on treating as genuine whatever they find in the published documents, or even what they can dig out of the Ministerial archives, it is only necessary to refer to an irrefutable witness, to the Senate *Conservateur*: there, in a decree I have cited above, you have read their own words: '*Considering that the freedom of the press, ...has been constantly subjected to arbitrary police censure, and that at the same time he has continually used the press to fill France and Europe with fabricated information, and false maxims...that the acts and reports, heard by the Senate, have been subject to alteration in the process of publication; etc.*' What can there be to say to that declaration?

Bonaparte's life was an incontestable reality that deception has been charged with documenting.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 6

#### Bonaparte's character

Monstrous pride and incessant affectation spoilt Napoleon's character. At the time of his supremacy, what need had he to exaggerate his stature, when the Lord of Hosts had furnished him with that chariot '*with living wheels*'.

He had Italian blood; his nature was complex: great men, a very small family on earth, unfortunately find no one but themselves to imitate them. At once a model and a copy, a real person and an actor playing that person, Napoleon was his own mimic; he would not have believed himself a hero if he had not decked himself out in a hero's costume. This curious weakness imparted something false and equivocal to his astonishing reality; one is in fear of mistaking the King of Kings for Roscius, or Roscius for the King of Kings.

Napoleon's qualities are so adulterated in the gazettes, pamphlets and verses, and even the popular songs imbued with Imperialism, that those qualities are completely unrecognizable. All the touching things attributed to Bonaparte in the *Anecdotes* about *prisoners*, the *dead*, the *soldiers* are nonsense, given the lie by his life's actions.

The Grandmother of my illustrious friend Béranger is merely an admirable ballad: Bonaparte had nothing good-natured about him. Tyranny personified, he was cold; that frigidity formed an antidote to his ardent imagination, in himself he found not words but a reality, and a reality ready to be irritated by the least show of independence: a midge that flew without his permission was to his mind a rebellious insect.

It was not enough to fill the ears with lies, it was necessary to fill the eyes also: here, in an engraving, we see Bonaparte taking his hat off to the Austrian wounded; there we have a little *soldier-boy* preventing the Emperor's passage; farther on Napoleon touches the plague-victims at Jaffa when he never touched them in fact; or he crosses the St Bernard Pass on a high-spirited horse in snowy weather, when in fact it was as fine as could be.

Is there not a wish now to transform the Emperor into a Roman of the early days of the Aventine, into a missionary of liberty, a citizen who instituted slavery only through love of its virtuous opposite? Judge from two actions of the great founder of equality: he ordered his brother's, Jérôme's, marriage to Miss Patterson to be annulled, because Napoleon's brother could only ally himself with the blood of princes; and later, on his return from Elba, he invested the new *democratic* Constitution with a peerage, and crowned it with the *Supplementary Act*.

That Bonaparte, continuator of the Republic's success, disseminated principles of freedom everywhere, that his victories helped to loosen the bonds between nations and their kings, freeing those peoples from the force of old customs and ancient concepts; that, in this sense, he contributed to social emancipation, I do not pretend to deny: but that he deliberately worked for the civil and political deliverance of countries, of his own free will; that he established the strictest of tyrannies with the idea of giving Europe, and France in particular, the widest possible constitution; that he was really a tribune disguised as a despot, that is a supposition I find impossible to accept.

Bonaparte, like the race of princes, wished for and sought only the arbitrary, arriving there however on the back of liberty, since he arrived on the world scene in 1793. The Revolution, which was Napoleon's wet nurse, quickly seemed to him an enemy; he never ceased opposing it. The Emperor, moreover, was well aware of evil when the evil did not emanate directly from the Emperor; since he was not lacking in moral sense. Sophisms advanced regarding Bonaparte's love of liberty prove only one thing, how one can abuse reason; now it lends itself to any argument. Has it not been established that the Terror was a time of humanity? Indeed, was not the abolition of the death-penalty demanded, while everyone was being killed? Have not great civilizers, as they are *called*, always murdered human beings, and is it not for that reason, as has been *proved*, that Robespierre was the heir of Jesus Christ?

The Emperor involved himself in everything; his mind never rested; he had a sort of perpetual agitation of ideas. With his impetuous nature, instead of steady and continuous progress, he advanced by leaps and bounds, threw himself at the world and shook it; he wanted none of that world, if he was obliged to wait for it: an incomprehensible being, who found a way to abase his loftiest actions, by disdaining them, and who raised his least elevated actions to his own level. Impatient of will, patient by nature, incomplete and as it were unfinished, Napoleon possessed lacunae in his genius: his understanding resembled the sky of that other hemisphere beneath which he was to die, that sky whose stars are separated by empty space.

One asks oneself by means of what influence Bonaparte, so aristocratic, such an enemy of the people, came to win the popularity he enjoyed: since that forger of yokes has assuredly remained popular with a nation whose pretension it was to raise altars to liberty and equality; this is the solution to the enigma:

Daily experience shows that the French are instinctively attracted to power; they have no love for freedom; equality alone is their idol. Now, equality and tyranny are secretly connected. In those two respects, Napoleon took his origin from a source in the hearts of the French, militarily inclined towards power, democratically enamored of the levelling process. Mounting the throne, he seated the people there too; a proletarian king, he humiliated kings and nobles in his ante-chambers; he levelled social ranks not by lowering them, but by elevating them: levelling down would have pleased plebeian envy more, levelling up was more flattering to its pride. French vanity was inflated too by the superiority Bonaparte gave us to the rest of Europe; another cause of Napoleon's popularity stemmed from the confinement of his last days. After his death, as people became better acquainted with what he had endured on St Helena, they began to pity him; they forgot his tyranny, remembering only that after first conquering our enemies, and subsequently drawing them into France, he had defended us from them; today we conceive that he might have saved us from the disgrace into which we have sunk: we were reminded by his misfortune of his fame; his glory profited by his adversity.

Finally his miraculous feats of arms have bewitched the young, in teaching them to worship brute force. His incredible good fortune has left every ambitious man with the conceited hope of reaching his heights of achievement.

And yet this man, popular as he was for levelling France with his egalitarian roller, was the mortal enemy of equality and the most powerful of organizers of an aristocracy within a democracy.

I cannot acquiesce in the false praise with which Bonaparte has been insulted, by those wishing to justify everything about his conduct; I cannot abrogate my reason, nor wax lyrical about things which arouse my horror or pity.

If I have succeeded in conveying what I have felt, my portrait of him will remain that of one of the premier figures in history; but I will have none of that fantastic creature composed of lies; lies which I saw born, which were recognized at first for what they were, but which have, in time, attained the status of truth, due to the infatuation and mindless credulity of mankind. I refuse to be a silly goose, and fall headlong into a fit of admiration. I endeavor to depict people conscientiously, without robbing them of what they possess, and without granting them what they do not. If success came to be equated with innocence; if, by corrupting posterity, it loaded it with its chains; if that suborned posterity, a slave hereafter, engendered by a slavish past, became the accomplice of whoever was to be victorious, where would the right lie, what would be the point of sacrifice? Good and evil rendered only relative, all morality would be effaced from human action.

Such is the problem that glittering fame causes an impartial writer: he ignores it as far as possible, in order to lay bare the truth; but the glory returns like a radiant mist and hides his picture in an instant.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 7

Whether Bonaparte has left us in renown the equivalent of what he has taken from us by force?

In order not to admit the reduction in territory and power which we owe to Bonaparte, the present generation consoles itself by claiming that what he has taken from us by force, he has given back in glory. *'Are we not now famous,'* they say, *'in every corner of the earth? Is not a Frenchman feared, pointed out, known on every shore?'*

But were we condemned only to one of those two conditions, immortality without power, or power without immortality? Alexander made the Greek name famous throughout the world; he left Greece no less than four empires in Asia; the language and civilization of the Hellenes extended from the Nile to Babylon, and from Babylon to the Indus. At his death, his ancestral kingdom of Macedonia, far from being diminished, had increased a hundredfold. Bonaparte spread our fame to every shore; under his command, the French subjugated Europe such that France's name yet prevails, and the Arc d'Étoile can stand there without seeming a puerile trophy; but before our defeats that monument would have been a witness instead of merely being a chronicle. Yet, had not Dumouriez with his conscripts already dealt the foreigner his first lessons, had not Jourdan won the Battle of Fleurus, Pichegru conquered Belgium and Holland, Hoche crossed the Rhine, Masséna triumphed at Zurich, Moreau at Hohenlinden; all exploits difficult to perform that prepared the way for others? Bonaparte gave unity to those disparate successes; he continued them, he made those victories shine forth: but without those first marvels could he have achieved the last? He rose above all others only when the mind within him was executing the inspirations of the poet.

Our sovereign's fame cost us a mere two or three hundred thousand men a year; we paid for it with a mere three million of our soldiers; our fellow citizens bought it at the price merely of their sufferings and of fifteen years of their freedom: what do such trifles matter? Are not the generations who come after us resplendent with glory? So much the worse for those who vanished! The disasters which occurred under the Republic ensured the safety of all; our misfortunes under the Empire did much more; they deified Bonaparte! That should suffice us.

It does not suffice me; I refuse to abase myself by hiding my country behind Bonaparte; he did not create France, France created him. No genius, no superiority, will ever induce me to accept a power which can deprive me of my freedom, my home, my friends with a word: if I do not add my wealth and my honor, it's because one's wealth does not seem to me worth defending; as for honor, it is immune to tyranny: it is the soul of martyrdom; bonds encompass it but do not enchain it; it pierces prison walls liberating the whole man along with it.

The wrong which a true philosophy will never forgive Bonaparte is that of having accustomed society to passive obedience, thrusting humanity back towards the age of moral degradation, and corrupting the nature of manners, to such a degree perhaps that it is impossible to say when men's hearts might begin once more to throb with noble feelings. The weakness which has overcome us both in regard to ourselves, and Europe, and our present abasement, are the consequence of Napoleonic slavery: all that remains to us is the ability to bear the yoke. Bonaparte has even disordered the future; it would not astonish me, if, in our sickly impotence we weakened further, barricading ourselves against Europe instead of going out to



meet it, giving up our internal freedoms to deliver ourselves from imaginary external dangers, losing ourselves in unworthy precautions, contrary to our genius and the fourteen centuries which have created our national way of life. The atmosphere of despotism Bonaparte left behind him will close around us like a fortress.

The fashion today is to greet liberty with a sardonic smile, to regard it as an old-fashioned concept fallen into disuse, like that of honor. I am unfashionable, I think the world is empty without liberty; it makes life worth living; if I were its last defender, I would never cease to proclaim its rights. To attack Napoleon in the name of past events, to assail him with dead ideas, is to provide him with fresh triumphs. He can be fought only with something greater than himself, namely liberty: he was guilty of offending her and consequently of offending the human race.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 8

The uselessness of the truths revealed above

Vain words! I feel their uselessness more than anyone. Hereafter all comment, however moderate, will be considered sacrilegious: it takes courage to brave the popular outcry, to ignore the fear of being considered narrow-minded and incapable of sensing or appreciating Napoleon's genius, solely because despite the true and lively admiration you profess for him, you still cannot sing the praises of his imperfections. The world belongs to Bonaparte; what the destroyer could not manage to conquer, his fame has usurped; living he lost a world, dead he possesses it. You can complain all you like: generations will pass without listening to you. Antiquity had the shade of Priam's son say: '*Do not judge Hector by his petty tomb: the Iliad, Homer, the Greeks in flight, those are my sepulchre: I am interred within all those great actions.*'

Bonaparte is no longer the real Bonaparte, but a legendary figure fashioned from the poet's whims, soldiers' tales, and popular legend; it is a Charlemagne or Alexander of medieval epic we behold today. This hero of fantasy will become the real individual, the other portraits will vanish. Bonaparte was so strongly wedded to absolute domination, that after enduring his tyranny in person, we now have to endure the tyranny of his memory. This latter despotism is more oppressive than the former, since if he was sometimes opposed while he was on the throne, there is universal agreement in accepting the chains he throws around us now he is dead. He is an obstacle to future events: how could power emerging from the army establish itself after him? Has he not killed all military glory in surpassing it? How could a free government arise, when he has corrupted the principle of freedom in men's hearts? No legitimate power now can drive that usurping spectre from the mind of man: soldier and citizen, republican and monarchist, rich and poor alike place busts and portraits of Napoleon in their homes, whether palace or cottage; the former vanquished agree with the former vanquishers; one cannot move a step in Germany without coming across him, since in that country the younger generation which rejected him has gone. Usually, the centuries sit down before the portrait of a great man, and complete it by lengthy, successive efforts. On this occasion the human race refused to wait; perhaps it was in too much haste to engrave the drawing.

And yet can a whole nation be in error? Is there not a true source from which all the lies emerged? It is time to compare the defective part of the statue with the finished part.

Bonaparte was not great by virtue of words, speeches, writings, or a love of liberty which he never possessed and never intended to foster; he is great in that he created firm and powerful government, a code of laws adopted in various countries, courts of justice, and schools, and a strong, active and intelligent administration which we are still living under; he is great in that he revived, enlightened, and governed Italy superlatively well; he is great in that, in France, he restored order from the midst of chaos, rebuilt the altars, reduced to working for him the savage demagogues, proud scholars, anarchic men of letters, Voltairean atheists, crossroads orators, cut-throats from the streets and prisons, starvelings from the tribune, clubs and scaffolds; he is great in that he curbed an anarchical mob; he is great in that he put an end to the familiarities of a shared fate, forcing soldiers who were his equals, and captains who were his superiors or rivals to bend to his will; he was above all great in that he was born of himself alone, able, with no other authority than his genius, to compel thirty six millions subjects to obey him in an age where no illusions surrounded the throne; he is great because he overthrew all the kings who opposed

him, because he defeated all the armies however varied in discipline and courage, because he taught his name to savages as well as to civilized peoples, because he surpassed all the conquerors who preceded him, because he filled ten years with such prodigious deeds that we find it hard today to comprehend them.

The famous delinquent is no longer a subject for triumphs, and the few men who still appreciate noble sentiments can do homage to his glory without fearing it, without repenting of having proclaimed what was fatal regarding that glory, and without being forced to recognize a destroyer of freedom as the father of emancipation: Napoleon has no need for borrowed merit; he was sufficiently endowed at birth.

So now that, severed from his age, his story is ended and his myth is beginning, let us go and watch him die: let us leave Europe; let us follow him beneath the skies of his apotheosis! The tremor of the sea, where his ships furled their sails, will indicate to us the place where he vanished: *‘At the extremity of our hemisphere,’* says Tacitus, *‘one hears the sound of the sun sinking beneath the waves: sonum insuper immergentis audiri.’*

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 9

The island of St Helena – Bonaparte travels the Atlantic

Juan da Nova, the Portuguese navigator, was wandering through the waters separating Africa from America. In 1502, on the 21st of May, Saint Helena's day, she being the mother of the first Christian Emperor, he discovered an island in latitude 16 degrees south, and longitude 6 degrees west; he landed there and named it after the day of its discovery.

Having visited the island over several years, the Portuguese abandoned it: the Dutch established themselves there, and then deserted it for the Cape of Good Hope; the British East India Company seized it; the Dutch took it back briefly in 1673, but the English occupied it once more and stayed there.

When Juan da Nova appeared at St Helena, the interior of the island was only inhabited by forest. Fernando Lopez, a renegade Portuguese, jumped ship onto this oasis, peopling it with cows, goats, chickens, guinea-fowl, and other birds from the four corners of the earth. There boarded successively, as if they were boarding the Ark, the creatures of the whole creation.

Five hundred Whites and five hundred Negroes, as well as Mulattos, Javanese and Chinese, composed the population of the island. Jamestown is the main town and port. Before the English became masters of the Cape of Good Hope, the Company fleets, returning from India, broke their voyage at Jamestown. The sailors laid out their cheap goods at the foot of the cabbage palms: mute and solitary forest turned, year by year, into a noisy populous market.

The climate of the island is healthy, but rainy: this prison of Neptune's, which is no more than twenty four miles or so in circumference, draws the Ocean vapors. The equatorial sun at midday oppresses everything that breathes, forcing silence and rest on all except the midges, obliging men and animals to seek the shade. The waves are illuminated at night by what is called *sea-light*; the light produced by the myriads of insects whose amours, charged by the storms, light the torches of a universal wedding on the surface of the deep. The shadow of the island, dark and solid, rests in the midst of a moving plain of diamonds. The spectacle of the sky is similarly magnificent, according to my learned and celebrated friend Monsieur von Humboldt (*Voyage to the Equinoctial Regions*). 'One experiences,' he says, '*I do not know what strange feeling, when in approaching the equator, and especially in crossing from one hemisphere to the other, one sees the stars one has known from childhood progressively declining and at last vanishing from the night sky. One knows one is no longer in Europe when one sees the immense constellation of Argo Navis, or the phosphorescent Magellanic Clouds.*

*We only saw the Southern Cross distinctly,' he says, 'on the night of the 4th of July, in 16 degrees of latitude.*

*I recalled that sublime passage of Dante's which the most celebrated commentators consider applies to this constellation:*

*"Io mi volsi a man destra, etc."*

*Among the Portuguese and Spaniards, a religious sentiment attaches to this constellation whose form recalls that sign of faith to them, planted by their forebears in the wastes of the New World.'*

The poets of France and Lusitania have set elegiac scenes on the shores of Melinde and the neighboring islands. It is a long way from those fictional sorrows to the real sufferings of Napoleon beneath stars known to Beatrice's singer, in tropical waters like those of Éléonore and Virginie. Did the great men of Rome, exiled to the isles of Greece, care for the charms of those shores and the divinities of Crete and Naxos? What delighted Da Gama and Camoëns failed to move Bonaparte: lying down at the vessel's stern, he appeared not to notice that unknown constellations glittered above his head whose rays would have met his gaze for the first time. What did he make of those stars he would never have seen in camp, which had not shone over his Empire? And yet there was no star lacking in his fate: one half of the firmament shone at his birth; the other half was destined for his funeral ceremony.

The sea Napoleon sailed was not that friendly sea that carried him from the havens of Corsica, the sands of Aboukir, the rocky cliffs of Elba, to the shores of Provence; it was that hostile ocean that, having imprisoned him in Germany, France, Portugal and Spain, only opened before his path in order to close behind him. Possibly, while watching the waves urging on his ship, the trade winds blowing him onwards with unceasing breath, he did not reflect on his downfall in the way to which I am inspired: every man experiences life in his own way, and he who yields the world a fine spectacle is less moved and less instructed than the spectator. Pre-occupied with the past, as though he might still rise again, hoping yet among his memories, Bonaparte hardly noticed that he had crossed the line, and he asked not who had traced those orbits within which the planets are forced to confine their eternal progress.

On the 15th of August, the wandering colony celebrated St Napoleon's Day on board the vessel conducting Napoleon to his last resting-place. On the 15th of October, the *Northumberland* was abreast of St Helena. The passenger went on deck; he could barely make out an imperceptible black speck in the bluish immensity; he took a telescope; he observed that particle of earth as he would once have surveyed a fortress in the midst of a lake. He could see the little town of St James set among sheer cliffs; there was not a wrinkle in that sterile facade that was without a gun clinging there: they seemed to wish to receive the captive in a manner suited to his genius.

On the 16th of October 1815, Bonaparte landed on the rock, his mausoleum, just as on the 12th of October 1492, Christopher Columbus landed in the New World, his monument: 'There,' says Walter Scott, 'at the gateway to the Indian Ocean, Bonaparte was deprived of the means of making a second avatar or incarnation on earth.'

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 10

Napoleon lands on St. Helena – His establishment at Longwood –  
Precautions – Life at Longwood – Visits.

Before being moved to the residence of Longwood, Bonaparte occupied a villa, The Briars, near Balcomb's Cottage. On the 9th of December, Longwood, hurriedly enlarged by carpenters from the English flotilla, received its guest. The house situated on a plateau in the hills, consisted of a drawing room, a dining room, a library, a study, and a bedroom. It was not much: those who had occupied the tower of the Temple and the keep at Vincennes were still worse lodged; true, their hosts were considerate enough as to abridge their stay. General Gourgaud, Monsieur and Madame Montholon with their children, Monsieur Las Cases and his son, camped out provisionally in tents; Monsieur and Madame Bertrand installed themselves at Hut's Gate, a cottage at the edge of the Longwood grounds.

For his exercise-yard, Napoleon had a stretch of sand twelve miles long; sentries surround the tract, and look-outs were sited on the tallest summits. The lion could extend his walks further, but he then had to agree to be guarded by an English watch-dog. Two camps defended this enclosure for the excommunicated: at night the circle of sentries contracted around Longwood. After nine, Napoleon was constrained from going out; the patrols made their rounds; cavalry on mounted sentry duty, and infantry posted here and there, kept watch over the creeks and ravines which sloped towards the sea. Two armed brigs cruised about, one to leeward, the other to windward of the island. What precautions to guard one man in the midst of an ocean! After sunset, no vessels could put out to sea; the fishing-boats were counted, and at night they were moored in harbor under the eye of a naval lieutenant. The sovereign leader who had summoned the world to his stirrup was called upon to present himself before a junior officer twice a day. Bonaparte would not acquiesce to that order; when he chanced to escape the notice of the officer on duty, that officer dare not say if and when he had seen that man whose absence it was more difficult to prove than to prove the presence of the universe.

Sir George Cockburn, the author of these harsh regulations, was replaced by Sir Hudson Lowe. The bickering then began that all the *Memoirs* speak of. If we are to believe these *Memoirs*, the new Governor was related to the species of giant St Helena spiders, and was the reptile of those woods where snakes are unknown. England lacked nobility, Napoleon dignity. To put an end to the demands of etiquette, Bonaparte sometimes seemed determined to conceal himself beneath a pseudonym, like a monarch when in a foreign country; he had the touching idea of taking the name of one of his aides-de-camp killed at the Battle of Arcola. France, Austria and Russia appointed Commissioners for the St Helena residence; the prisoner was accustomed to receiving the ambassadors of the two latter powers; the Legitimacy, which had not recognized Napoleon as Emperor, would have acted more nobly by not recognizing Napoleon as a prisoner.

A large wooden house, constructed in London, was sent to St Helena; but Napoleon did not feel well enough to live in it yet. His life at Longwood was arranged thus: he rose at no set time; Monsieur Marchand, his valet, read to him as he lay in bed; when he rose each morning, he dictated to Generals Montholon and Gourgaud, and the son of Monsieur de Las Cases. He breakfasted at ten, went for a ride or a drive until three, returned indoors at six and went to bed at eleven. He affected the costume in which he

is depicted in Isabey's portrait: in the morning he wrapped himself in a caftan and wound a Madras kerchief round his head.

St Helena lies between the two Poles. Navigators journeying from one to the other welcome this first station where the land soothes eyes wearied by the sight of the Ocean and offers fruit and the coolness of fresh water to mouths chafed by the salt. Bonaparte's presence changed this promised isle to a plague-stricken rock: foreign ships no longer touched there; as soon as they were sighted fifty miles off, a cruiser went to challenge them, and ordered them to stand away; they were not allowed to anchor, except in stormy weather, unless they were Royal Navy vessels.

Some of the English travellers who had recently admired, or were off to view, the marvels of the Ganges visited another marvel on their way: India, accustomed to conquerors, had one chained at her gate.

Napoleon reluctantly allowed these visits. He agreed to see Lord Amherst, on the latter's return from his Chinese embassy. Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm he liked: *'Does your Government,'* he asked one day, *'intend to keep me on this rock until I die?'* The Admiral replied that he feared so. *'Then my death will soon occur.'* – *I hope not, Monsieur; you must live long enough to record your great deeds; they are so numerous that the task will guarantee you a long life.'*

Napoleon was not offended by that simple title of *Monsieur*; he revealed himself at that instant in his true greatness. Fortunately for him, he never wrote his own life; he would have diminished its dimensions: men of that nature should leave their memoirs to be recounted by that unknown voice, which belongs to no one and which issues from nations and centuries. Only we, the commonplace ones, are allowed to speak of ourselves, since otherwise no one would speak of us.

Captain Basil Hall presented himself at Longwood: Bonaparte remembered having met the Captain's father at Brienne: *'Your father,'* he said, *'was the first Englishman I ever met; that is why I have remembered it all my life.'* He spoke with the Captain about the recent discovery of Loo-Choo: *'The inhabitants have no weapons,'* said the Captain. – *'No weapons! Bonaparte exclaimed – Neither cannon nor rifles – Spears surely, bows and arrows? – Nothing like that. – No daggers? – No daggers. – Well how do they fight? – They know nothing of what is happening in the world; they know nothing of the existence of France and England; they have never heard of Your Majesty.'* Bonaparte smiled in a manner that amazed the Captain: the more serious the face, the more beautiful the smile.

The various voyagers remarked that there was not a trace of color in Bonaparte's features: his head resembled a marble bust whose whiteness had yellowed slightly with time. No furrows on his brow, no hollows in his cheeks; his soul seemed at peace. That visible serenity gave the impression that the flame of his genius had died. He spoke slowly; his expression was pleasant and almost tender; sometimes he revealed a penetrating glance, but the state swiftly passed; his eyes misted over and became saddened.

Ah! Other voyagers known to Napoleon had once appeared on that shore.

After the explosion of the *'infernal machine'*, a *senatus consulte* of 5th of January 1801 pronounced judgement, a simple matter for the police, the exile overseas of three hundred Republicans: embarked on the frigate La Chiffone and the corvette La Flèche, they were taken to the Seychelles and shortly afterwards scattered through the Comoros archipelago, between Africa and Madagascar: there almost all of them died. Two of the deportees, Lefranc and Saunois, who managed to escape on an American vessel,

landed on St Helena in 1803: it was there twelve years later that Providence was to imprison their great oppressor.

The all-too-famous General Rossignol, their companion in misfortune, a quarter of an hour before his last sigh, exclaimed: 'I die conquered by the most terrible pain; but I would die content if I knew that my country's despot was to endure the same suffering.' So, even in that other hemisphere, freedom's curses awaited him who had betrayed her.



## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 11

Manzoni – Bonaparte’s illness – Ossian – Napoleon’s daydreams by the sea – Projects of escape – Bonaparte’s last occupation – He lies down and does not rise again – He dictates his will – Napoleon’s religious sentiments – Vignali the Chaplain – Napoleon argues with Antomarchi, his doctor – He receives the last sacraments – He dies

Italy, woken from its long sleep by Napoleon, turned its eyes towards its illustrious son who wished to reinstate its former glory and with whom it had fallen once more under the yoke. The sons of *the Muses*, the noblest and most grateful of men, when they are not the basest and most ungrateful, gazed at St Helena. The latest poet of Virgil’s homeland sang of the latest warrior of Caesar’s:

*‘Tutto ei provo, la Gloria  
Maggior dopo il periglio,  
La fuga e la vittoria,  
La reggia e il triste esiglio:  
Due volte nella polvere,  
Due volte sugli altar.*

*Ei si nomò; due secoli,  
L’un contro l’altro armato,  
Sommessi a lui si volsero,  
Come aspettando il fato:  
Ei fè silenzio ed arbitro  
S’assise in mezzo a lor.’*

‘He experienced all,’ says Manzoni, ‘his glory greater after peril, flight and victory, royalty and sad exile, twice in the dust, twice at the altar.’

‘He spoke his name: two centuries, armed against each other, submitted to him, awaiting their fate: he commanded silence and sat in judgement between them.’

Bonaparte was approaching his end; plagued by an internal pain, poisoned by sorrow, he had endured that pain in the midst of prosperity: it was the only inheritance he had received from his father; the rest came to him out of God’s munificence.

He had already known six years of exile; he needed less time to conquer Europe. He remained almost perpetually indoors, and read Ossian in Cesarotti’s Italian translation. Everything saddened him, beneath a sky under which life seemed short, the sun remaining for three days less in that hemisphere than in ours. When Bonaparte went out, he passed along stony paths bordered by aloes and scented broom. He walked among sparsely-flowering gum-trees bent in one direction by the prevailing winds, or else concealed himself in thick clouds that hugged the ground. He was seen sitting at the foot of *Diana’s Peak*, *Flagstaff*, or *Ladder Hill*, contemplating the sea through the gaps in the mountains. Before him stretched an Ocean which on one side washes the African coast, on the other the shores of America, and which flows like a river without banks to lose itself in the southern seas. No civilized land nearer than the Cape of Storms. Who can say what thoughts went through the mind of that Prometheus, torn apart by death while still

living, when, pressing his hand to his aching breast, he looked out over the waves! Christ was carried to a mountain summit from which He viewed the kingdoms of the world; but in Christ's case the tempter of mankind was told: '*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*'

Bonaparte, forgetting a thought of his own which I have quoted ('*Not having given myself life I will not deprive myself of it.*'), spoke of killing himself; he also forgot his order of the day regarding the suicide of one of his soldiers. He had sufficient confidence in the devotion of his companions in captivity to believe that they would consent to suffocating with him in the fumes from a brazier: a grand illusion. Such are the intoxications born of long supremacy; but regarding Napoleon's fits of impatience we must consider the degree of suffering he had attained. Monsieur de Las Cases having written to Lucien on a piece of white silk, in contravention of the rules, received the order to leave St Helena: his absence increased the void around the exile.

On the 18th of May 1817, Lord Holland, in the House of Lords, introduced a motion on the subject of the complaints transmitted to England by General Montholon: '*Posterity will not ask*' he said, '*whether Napoleon was justly punished for his crimes, but whether England showed the generosity befitting a great nation.*' Lord Bathurst opposed the motion.

Cardinal Fesch sent two priests to his nephew. Princess Borghèse begged the favor of being allowed to join her brother: '*No,*' said Napoleon, '*I do not wish her to witness my humiliation, and the insults to which I am subjected.*' That beloved sister of his, *germana Jovis* (*Jove's sister*) did not cross the seas; she died in a region where Napoleon had left his fame behind him.

Projects were conceived for his abduction: a Colonel Latapie, at the head of a band of American adventurers, contemplated a landing on St Helena. Johnston, a bold smuggler, thought of carrying Bonaparte off in a submarine. Some young noblemen entered into these plans; they schemed at breaking the oppressor's bonds; while they would have left some liberator of the human race to die in chains without a thought. Bonaparte hoped his deliverance might be achieved on the back of the political movements in Europe. If he had lived until 1830, perhaps he would have returned to us; but what would he have done amongst us? He would have seemed obsolete and outdated in the midst of new ideas. Once his tyranny seemed like liberty to our slavery; now his greatness would look like despotism to our pettiness. In the present age everything is decrepit in a day; whoever lives too long dies while they are still alive. Advancing through life, we leave behind three or four representations of ourselves, differing one from another; we see them again through the mists of the past like portraits painted at different ages.

Bonaparte stripped of his power occupied himself exactly like a child: he amused himself by making an ornamental pond in his garden; he added a few fish: the cement used in making the pond contained copper, and the fish died. Bonaparte said: '*Everything that attaches itself to me is doomed.*'

Towards the end of February 1821, Napoleon was obliged to take to his bed and did not rise again. '*How low I have fallen!*' he murmured, '*I have overturned a world and cannot lift an eyelid!*' He had no faith in medicine and objected to a consultation between Antomarchi and the Jamestown doctors. However he allowed Dr. Arnott to approach his death-bed. From the 16th to the 24th of April he dictated his will; on the 28th, he ordered his heart to be sent to Marie-Louise; he forbade any English surgeon to lay a hand on him after his death. Convinced that he was succumbing to the disease which afflicted his father, he asked

for the autopsy report to be sent to the Duke of Reichstadt: the paternal precaution was of no avail; Napoleon II has joined Napoleon I.

At this final hour, the religious feeling, with which Bonaparte had always been imbued, awoke. Thibaudeau in his *Memoirs of the Consulate*, tells us, with reference to the restoration of religious worship, that the First Consul said to him: ‘*Last Sunday, in the midst of Nature’s hush, I was walking in those gardens (at Malmaison); the sound of the bells from Rueil happened to strike my ear and revived all the impressions of my youth; I was moved, so strong is the force of early habit, and I said to myself: “If it is so for me, what effect must like memories not produce on simple and credulous people?”* Let your philosophers reply to that!’ ..... and raising his hands to heaven: ‘*Who is He, who made it all?*’

In 1797, by his Proclamation of Macerata, Bonaparte permitted the French priests who had taken refuge in the Papal States to remain there, forbade them to be molested, ordered the monasteries to support them, and allotted them a stipend.

His vagaries in Egypt, his fits of anger against the Church, which he restored, show that a spiritual instinct dominated in the very midst of his errors, since his lapses and his rages are not philosophical at root and bear the imprint of a religious temperament.

When Bonaparte was giving Vignali details of the tapers with which he wished his remains to be surrounded in the chapel, thought that he perceived his instructions were displeasing to Antomarchi, and he explained his conduct to the doctor, saying: ‘*You are above these weaknesses: but what would you, I am neither a doctor nor a philosopher; I believe in God; I am of my father’s religion. Not all who wish can be atheists.....How can you not believe in God? After all, everything proclaims his existence, and the greatest geniuses have believed so...You are a doctor... such people deal in nothing but material things: they never believe in anything.*’

You Rationalists abandon your admiration for Napoleon; you have nothing in common with that poor man: did he imagine that a comet had come for him, as one once carried off Caesar? Moreover, he believed in God; he was of his father’s religion; he was no philosopher; he was no atheist; he had not, as you have, joined battle with the Eternal One, though he had vanquished a good number of kings; he found that everything proclaimed the existence of the Supreme Being; he declared that the greatest geniuses had believed in His existence, and he wished to believe as his forefathers did. Lastly, terrible to relate, this foremost man of modern times, this man for all the centuries, was a Christian of the nineteenth century! His will begins with this statement:

‘*I DIE IN THE APOSTOLIC AND ROMAN RELIGION, IN THE BOSOM OF WHICH I WAS BORN MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AGO.*’

In the thirds paragraph of Louis XVI’s will, we read:

‘*I DIE IN THE UNION OF OUR HOLY MOTHER THE CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC, AND ROMAN CHURCH.*’

The Revolution taught us many lessons but is any one of them comparable with this? Napoleon and Louis XVI making the same profession of faith! Do you wish to know the worth of the Cross? Then search the whole world for what best suits virtue in misfortune or the man of genius on his death bed.

On the 3rd of May, Napoleon was given Extreme Unction and received the Blessed Viaticum. The silence of the bedroom was punctuated only by the dying man's irregular breathing and the steady tick of a pendulum clock: the shadow, before fading on the dial, did a few more rounds; the sun which cast it found difficulty in setting. On the 4th, the storm of Cromwell's death agony rose: nearly all the trees at Longwood were uprooted. Finally, on the 5th, at eleven minutes to six in the evening, in the midst of wind, rain and the thunder of the waves, Bonaparte rendered up to God the mightiest breath of life that ever animated human clay. The last words on the conqueror's lips were: '*Head...army, or Head of the Army.*' His thoughts still wandered amongst battles. When he closed his eyes forever, his sword, which died with him, lay at his left side, and a crucifix rested on his breast: the symbol of peace applied to Napoleon's heart calmed the throbbing of that heart, as a ray of sunlight quiets the flood.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 12

#### Funeral rites

Bonaparte had first asked to be buried in the Cathedral at Ajaccio, then, by a codicil to his will dated the 16th of April 1821, he bequeathed his bones to France: Heaven had served him better; his real mausoleum is the rock on which he expired: turn again to my account of the Duc d'Enghien's death. Napoleon, foreseeing the opposition of the British Government to his last wishes, eventually chose a burial place on St Helena.

In the narrow valley known as *Sane* or *Geranium Valley*, and now *the Valley of the Tomb*, there is a spring; Napoleon's Chinese servants, as faithful as Camoën's Javanese, used to fill their pitchers there: two weeping willows hung over the fount; green grass studded with *champa* grows all around, '*Champa*,' say the Sanskrit poems, '*for all its splendor and perfume, is not a sought after flower, because it grows on graves.*' In the declivities of the deforested slopes, there is a sparse growth of bitter lemon trees, nut-bearing coconut palms, larches and a catchfly from which the sap is gathered that sticks to the beards of goats.

Napoleon liked the willows by the spring; he asked peace of the Sane Valley, as the exiled Dante sought peace at the monastery of Corvo. In gratitude for the transient repose which he enjoyed there in the last days of his life, he chose this valley to shelter his eternal rest. Speaking of its spring he said: '*If God allowed me to recover, I would raise a monument at the place where it rises.*' That monument was his tomb. In Plutarch's day, at a spot on the banks of the Strymon dedicated to the nymphs, one could still see a stone seat on which Alexander sat.

Napoleon, booted and spurred, dressed in the uniform of a Colonel of the Guard, decorated with the Legion of Honor, was laid out on his little iron bedstead; on the face which had never shown surprise, the soul, in departing, had left a sublime stupor. The planers and joiners soldered and nailed Bonaparte into a fourfold coffin of mahogany, lead, mahogany once more, and tin; it was as if they feared he could never be sufficiently contained. The cloak which the former conqueror had worn at the vast funeral rite of Marengo served as a pall for the coffin.

The obsequies were held on the 28th of May. The weather was fine; four horses, led by grooms on foot, drew the hearse; twenty four unarmed English grenadiers escorted it; Napoleon's horse followed. The island's garrison lined the slopes along the road. Three squadrons of dragoons preceded the cortege; the 20th Infantry Regiment, the Marines, the St Helena Volunteers, and the Royal Artillery with fifteen guns, brought up the rear. Groups of musicians, stationed at intervals on the rocks, exchanged mournful airs. At a narrow defile, the hearse halted; the twenty-four unarmed grenadiers lifted the body and had the honor of carrying it on their shoulders to the grave. Three artillery salvoes saluted Napoleon's remains as he was lowered into the earth: all the noise he had made on that earth could not penetrate six feet beneath it.

A stone, which was to have been used in the building of the exile's new house, was lowered onto his coffin, like a trap-door on his last prison.

The verses from Psalm 87 of the Vulgate were read: '*I am poor, and in labors from my youth: and, being exalted, have been humbled and troubled. Thy wrath hath come upon me...*' The flag-ship fired its gun at

one minute intervals. This warlike rhythm, lost in the immensity of the Ocean, sounded a response to the *Requiescat in Pace*. The Emperor, interred by the victors of Waterloo, had heard the last cannon-shot of that battle; he did not hear the last detonation with which England troubled and honored his sleep at St Helena. All withdrew, holding willow branches in their hands, as if returning from the Feast of Palms.

When Napoleon left France it was said that he ought to be buried beneath the wreck of his final battle; Lord Byron in the satirical Ode cited already writes:

*'To die a prince or live a slave  
Thy choice is most ignobly brave.'*

That was to badly misjudge the power of hope in an irreversible soul which retained everything and from which nothing could be returned; Lord Byron thought that the dictator to kings had abdicated his fame with his sword, and was going to die forgotten. The poet ought to have known that Napoleon's destiny was a muse, like all noble destinies. That muse was able to change an abortive outcome into a tragedy which renewed its hero. Napoleon's solitary exile and tomb have clothed his illustrious memory with a different kind of magic. Alexander did not die beneath the gaze of Greece; he disappeared in remote Babylon. Bonaparte did not die beneath the gaze of France; he vanished below the sumptuous horizons of the torrid zones. He remained like a hermit or a pariah in a valley, at the end of a deserted pathway. The magnitude of the silence which weighed upon him equaled the immensity of sound that had accompanied him. The nations were absent, their throngs withdrew; the tropical bird, *harnessed*, as Buffon says, to the *sun's chariot*, plunges from the source of light; where does it alight today? It alights on remains whose weight tilted the globe.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 13

#### The destruction of Napoleon's world

*Imposuerunt omnes sibi diademata, post mortem eius...at multiplicata sunt mala in terra* (Apocrypha: I Maccabees I.9).

*‘And after his death they all put crowns upon themselves...and evils were multiplied in the earth.’*

This comment from Maccabees on Alexander seems made for Napoleon: *‘The crowns had been taken up, and the evils of the earth were multiplied.’* Twenty years have barely passed since Bonaparte's death and already the French and Spanish monarchies are no more. The map of the world has altered; one must learn a new geography; divorced from their legitimate sovereigns, nations have been thrown to chance-met sovereigns; famous actors have left the stage onto which unknown actors step; the eagles have flown from the summit of a tall pine now toppled into the sea, while frail shellfish have attached themselves to the sides of the trunk which still acts as a protection.

As, in the final analysis, everything marches towards its end, *the terrible spirit of novelty which traverses the world*, as the Emperor described it, and which he opposed with the tide of his genius, once more takes its course; the conqueror's institutions are failing; he will be the last great individual being; no one will rule from now on in our petty, levelling society; the shadow of Napoleon alone will be cast at the edge of the old destroyed world, like a phantom of the deluge on the brink of its abyss: distant posterity will discover that shadow above the gulf, into which unknown centuries shall fall until the day that social renaissance dawns.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 14

#### My last comments on Napoleon

Since I am writing my own life even while dealing with those of others, great or small, I am obliged to blend this life with men and things, when it chances to be recalled. Did I pursue the memory of the exile, who awaited the execution of God's decree in his Ocean prison, without pause, relentlessly? No.

The peace Napoleon concluded with kings and with his gaolers, he concluded with me also: I was a son of the sea as he was; my birthplace was a rock like his. I flatter myself that I understood Napoleon better than those who saw him more often and approached him more closely.

Napoleon on St Helena, no longer needing to maintain his anger against me, had abandoned his hostility; becoming more just in turn, I wrote in this article for the *Conservateur*:

*'People have called Bonaparte a scourge; but God's scourges retain something of eternity and the grandeur of the divine wrath from which they emanate: 'Ossa arida...dabo vobis spiritum et vivetis: O ye dry bones...I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live'. Born on an island in order to go and die on an island, at the boundary of three continents; cast into the midst of seas where *Camoëns* had seemed to prophesy his presence by placing there his Giant of the Tempests, Bonaparte cannot stir on his rock without our being appraised of it by a tremor; a single step by this new *Adamastor* at the other Pole can be felt at this. If Napoleon, escaping from the clutches of his gaolers, were to retire to the United States, his gaze fixed on the Ocean would be enough to trouble the nations of the Old World; his mere presence on the Atlantic's American shore would oblige Europe to set up camp on the opposing one.'*

This article reached Bonaparte at St Helena; a hand which he had thought hostile poured balm on his wounds, and he said to *Monsieur Montholon*:

*'If, in 1814 and 1815, royal confidence had not been placed in men whose souls were enervated by circumstances too overpowering for them, or who, traitors to their country, only saw safety for their master's throne beneath the yoke of the Holy Alliance; if the *Duke de Richelieu*, whose ambition it was to deliver his country from the presence of foreign bayonets, or Chateaubriand who rendered eminent service at Ghent, had been given control of things, France would have emerged powerful and formidable from those two great national crises. Chateaubriand has been endowed by nature with the sacred fire: his works prove it. His style is not *Racine*'s; it is that of a prophet. If ever he is appointed to the helm of State, it is possible that Chateaubriand may go astray: so many others come to grief in that way! But what is certain is that his genius befits all national greatness, and he would have rejected with indignation the shameful acts of that administration.'*

Such was my last relationship with Bonaparte. – Why not confess that this judgement *flatters my heart's proud weakness*? Plenty of little men to whom I rendered great service have not judged me as favorably as that giant whose power I had dared to challenge.



## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 15

#### St Helena since Napoleon's death

As the Napoleonic world was fading, I made enquiries about the place where Napoleon himself had vanished. The burial site on St Helena has already consumed one of the willows contemporary with him: the decrepit fallen tree is mutilated every day by pilgrims. The sepulchre is surrounded by a cast-iron railing; three flagstones have been laid in the form of a cross over the grave; a few irises are growing at the head and foot; the valley spring still flows where a prodigious life ran dry. Travellers carried there by storms consider themselves obliged to record their obscurity on the illustrious tomb. An old woman has established herself nearby and makes a living from the shadow of a memory; a pensioner mounts guard in a sentry-box.

The old Longwood, two hundred paces from the new, has been abandoned. Crossing a yard filled with manure, one arrives at a stable; it used to be Bonaparte's bedroom. A Negro shows a kind of passage occupied by a hand-mill and tells one: '*Here he died.*' The room where Napoleon first saw the light of day was in all likelihood no larger or more luxurious.

At the new Longwood, *Plantation House*, where the Governor resides, one can view a portrait of the Duke of Wellington and paintings of his battles. A glass-fronted cupboard contains a piece from the tree beside which the English general stood at Waterloo; the relic is placed between an olive-branch from the Garden of Olives, and the ornaments of South Sea savages: a curious association presented by the abusers of the waves. In vain the vanquisher substitutes himself here for the vanquished, protected by a branch from the Holy Land and a memory of Cook; it suffices that at St Helena one may discover solitude, the Ocean and Napoleon.

If one researched the history of shores made famous by tombs, birthplaces, or palaces, what a variety of things and fates one would find, since such strange metamorphoses take place even in the obscure dwellings to which our petty lives are attached! In what hut was Clovis born? In what chariot did Attila see the light of day? What stretch of torrent covers Alaric's burial place? What jackal stands over the site of Alexander's gold or crystal coffin? How many times has this dust changed place? And all the mausoleums of Egypt and India: to whom do they belong? Only God knows the reason for these changes linked to the mysteries of the future: there are truths hidden from men in the depths of time; they are made manifest only with the help of the centuries, just as there are stars so far from earth their light has not yet reached us.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 16

#### Bonaparte's exhumation

While I have been writing this, time has marched on; it has produced an event which would contain a measure of grandeur if events nowadays did not immediately sink into the mud. London has been asked for the return of Bonaparte's remains; the request has been granted: what does England care about old bones? She could give us as many presents of that sort as we wish. Napoleon's remains return to us at our moment of humiliation; they could even have been subjected to the right of search; but the foreigner was indulgent: he has granted them free passage.

The removal of Napoleon's remains is an offence against his memory. No sepulchre in Paris is worth more than Sane Valley: who would wish to imagine Pompey anywhere else than in the furrow of sand thrown up by a poor freedman, helped by an aged legionary? What are we to do, in the midst of our woes, with those magnificent relics? Could the hardest granite ever do justice to the permanence of Bonaparte's achievement? Have we a Michelangelo still to sculpt the memorial statue? How shall his monument be fashioned? Mausoleums are for little men, for great men a stone and a name. Might they not, at least, have suspended his coffin from the coping of the Arc de Triomphe, so that the nations could see their master from afar, carried on the shoulders of his victories? Was Trajan's urn not set at the base of his column in Rome? Amongst us, Napoleon will be lost among the miserable hosts of the dead who slip away silently. God grant that he is not exposed to the vicissitudes of political change we experience, defended though he may be by Louis XIV, Vauban and Turenne!

Be that as it may, a frigate was allocated to one of Louis-Philippe's sons: a name made famous by a former naval victory protected it on the waves. Sailing from Toulon, where Bonaparte in all his power had embarked on the conquest of Egypt, the new Argo touched at St Helena to reclaim the non-existent. The sepulchre, clothed in silence, still rested immobile in Sane or Geranium Valley. One of the two weeping willows had fallen; Lady Dallas, wife of the former Governor of the island, had planted eighteen young willows and thirty-four cypresses to replace the dead tree; the spring there still flowed as it had when Napoleon drank its water. During the whole of a night, under the supervision of an English captain named Alexander, the work of opening the tomb was carried out. The four coffins fitted one inside the other; the mahogany coffin, the lead coffin, the second mahogany or tamarind wood coffin, and the tin coffin were found to be intact. The inspection of these mummy covers was performed inside a tent, in the center of a circle of officers, some of whom had known Bonaparte.

When the last coffin was opened, everyone gazed inside: '*We were faced*,' says the Abbé Coquereau, '*with a whitish mass which covered the whole length of the body. Doctor Gaillard, touching it, recognized it as a white satin lining which had cushioned the inside of the coffin lid: it had become detached and enveloped the remains like a shroud.....the whole body was as if covered by a light foam; it was as if we were looking at it through a diaphanous cloud. The head was unmistakably his: a pillow raised it slightly; his the broad forehead, the eyes, the sockets of which were outlined beneath the eyelids, still fringed by a few lashes; his cheeks were fleshy, only his nose had suffered, his mouth which was half-open revealed three remarkably white teeth; on his chin the traces of a beard were perfectly clear; his two hands in particular, so fresh in tone and coloring, seemed to belong to someone who still breathed;*

*one of them, the left, was raised a little higher than the other; his nails had grown after death: they were long and pale; one of his boots had come un-sewn and showed four dull-white toes.'*

What was it struck these *necrophages*: the inanity of earthly things: human vanity? No, the beauty of the dead man; only his nails had lengthened, to tear, I presume, at what remained of liberty in the world. His feet, restored to humility, no longer rested on cushions bearing crowns; they lay bare in the dust. Condé's son was also laid fully dressed in the moat at Vincennes; yet Napoleon, so well preserved, had been reduced to precisely those three teeth which the bullets had left intact in the Duc d'Enghien's jaw.

The eclipsed star of St Helena has reappeared to the delight of the nations: the world has seen Napoleon again; Napoleon has not seen the world. The conqueror's vagabond remains have appeared beneath the same stars which guided him into exile: Bonaparte has passed through the tomb, as he passed everywhere, without stopping. Landed at Le Havre, the body arrived at the Arc de Triomphe, a canopy beneath which the sun shows its face on certain days of the year. From that arch to the Invalides, one saw nothing but wooden columns, plaster busts, a statue of the Great Condé (a hideous pulpy mass which wept) and pinewood obelisks commemorating the victor's indestructible life. Bitterly cold weather had the generals around the hearse dropping, as in the retreat from Moscow. Nothing was fine, except the funeral barge which, under the command of a prince hostile to the English, had silently carried Napoleon and a crucifix along the Seine.

Robbed of his rock-bound catafalque, Napoleon had come to be buried in the grime of Paris. Instead of the ships which once saluted the new Hercules, consumed on Mount Oeta, the washerwomen of Vaugirard, and pensioners not known to the Grand Army, will wander round him. As a prelude to this pettiness, little men could think of nothing better than an open-air waxwork show *à la Curtius*. After a few days rain, nothing remained of these decorations but mud-stained fragments. Whatever we may do, the conqueror's real sepulchre will always be thought of as in the midst of the waves: the body is with us, the life immortal at St Helena.

Napoleon has closed an era of the past: he made war too vast for it to return in a form capable of interesting mankind. He slammed the doors of the Temple of Janus; and against those doors he heaped a pile of corpses, to prevent them ever opening again.

## BOOK XXIV

### CHAPTER 17

#### My visit to Cannes

In Europe I have visited the place where Bonaparte landed after breaking his exile on Elba. I alighted at the inn at Cannes at the very moment when the guns were firing in commemoration of the 29th of July; one of the results of the Emperor's excursion which he doubtless did not foresee. Night had fallen when I arrived at Golfe-Juan; I stayed at an isolated house beside the highroad. Jacquemin, potter and inn-keeper, the owner of the house, led me towards the sea. We went by way of sunken roads between olive-trees beneath which Bonaparte had bivouacked: to the left on a side-path stood a sort of shed: Napoleon, invading France on his own, had deposited the luggage that had landed with him in this shed.

Reaching the shore, I saw a tranquil sea unruffled by the slightest breath; the swell, as thin as gauze, rolled across the sand without noise or foam. A splendid sky, resplendent with myriad constellations, hung above my head. The crescent moon soon sank and concealed itself behind a mountain. There was only a single yacht, and two boats at anchor, throughout the whole Gulf: on the left the lighthouse at Antibes could be seen; on the right the Lérin Isles; before me, the open sea stretched away south towards that Rome to which Bonaparte had first sent me.

The Lérin Isles, now called the Sainte-Marguerite Isles, once sheltered a few Christians fleeing from the Barbarians. St Honoratus coming from Hungary landed on one of these rocks: he climbed a palm-tree, made the sign of the cross, and all the serpents died, that is to say Paganism vanished, and a new civilization was born in the West.

Fourteen hundred years later, Bonaparte came to put an end to that civilization in the very spot where the saint had begun it. The last solitary to inhabit a cell there was the Iron Mask, if the Iron Mask ever existed. From the silence of Golfe-Juan, from the peace of those islands inhabited by the anchorites of old, emerged the thunder of Waterloo, which crossed the Atlantic, to die away on St Helena.

Between memories of two societies, between an extinct world and a world bordering on extinction, on that deserted shore at night, conceive what I felt. I left the beach in a sort of religious consternation, leaving the waves to pass to and fro, over the traces of Bonaparte's penultimate footsteps, without erasing them.

At the end of each great age, some voice, mournful with regret for the past, can be heard sounding a curfew: Thus they moaned who saw Charlemagne vanish, St Louis, Francis I, Henri IV and Louis XIV. What can I not add in turn, eyewitness as I am to two or three past worlds? When, like me, you have met a Washington, a Bonaparte, what is there left to gaze at after the plough of the American Cincinnatus, and the tomb at St Helena? Why have I outlived an epoch and the men among whom I belong according to my birth date? Why did I not fall with my contemporaries, the last of an exhausted race? Why am I left alone to seek their bones in the dust and dark of a crowded catacomb? I am weary of my survival. Oh, if only I possessed the indifference of one of those old long-shore Arabs, whom I met in Africa! Sitting cross-legged on a little rope mat, their heads wrapped in a burnouse, they while away their last hours following with their eyes, in the sky's azure, the beautiful flamingo flying over the ruins of Carthage; lulled by the murmur of the waves, they half-forget their own existence and sing in a low voice a song of the sea: they are about to die.

**End of Book XXIV**

BOOK XXV  
CHAPTER 1  
The Changing World

Paris, 1839 (Revised 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1845)

To plunge from Bonaparte and the Empire into what followed them, is to plunge from reality into nothingness, from the summit of a mountain into the gulf. Did everything not end with Bonaparte? Ought I to speak of anything else? What could be of interest after him? Can there be any question of who or what, in the wake of such a man? Dante alone had the right to associate with the great poets in the regions of the afterlife. How can one speak of Louis XVIII instead of the Emperor? I am embarrassed when I think that I had to twitter along at that time with a crowd of miniscule creatures of whom I made one, dubious-seeming nocturnal beings as we were, in a landscape from which the great sun had departed.

The Bonapartists themselves had shriveled. Their limbs were folded and contracted: a soul was missing from the new universe the moment Bonaparte withdrew his breath; objects faded now that they were no longer illuminated by the glow which had given them shape and color. At the beginning of these Memoirs I had only myself to speak of: now there is always a kind of primacy in individual human solitude; then I was surrounded by miracles: those miracles sustained my voice; but in the days after the conquest of Egypt, after the battles of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, after the retreat from Russia, after the taking of Paris, the return from Elba, the battle of Waterloo, the funeral on St Helena: what then? Portraits to which Molière's genius alone could grant theatrical gravity!

In expressing our lack of worth, I have examined my conscience closely; I have asked myself whether I have not identified myself in a calculated manner with the nullity of those days, in order to claim the right to condemn others; persuaded as I was *in petto* (privately) that my name spoke for itself among all those unassuming souls. No: I am convinced that we will all vanish: firstly because we have not that in us with which to stay alive; secondly because the century, in which we are beginning or ending our days, lacks the means itself with which to keep us alive. Mutilated, worn out, despicable generations, without faith, dedicated to the nothingness they love, do not know how to grant anything immortality; they have no power to create a reputation; when you give ear to their speech you hear nothing: no sound issues from the lips of the dead.

However one thing strikes me: the little world, which I address now, was superior to the world which succeeded it in 1830: we were giants in comparison with the society of mites which it bred.

The Restoration offers at least one aspect from which one can retrieve something of importance: after the pride of a single man, that man being past, the pride of mankind was reborn. If despotism has been replaced by liberty, if we know something of freedom now, if we have lost the habit of crawling, if the laws of human nature are no longer unknown, it is to the Restoration that we are thus indebted. Let me throw myself into the throng, so that, to the best of my abilities, I too might revive the species if the individual is finished.

On then, let us pursue our task! Let us plunge with groans towards myself and my colleagues. You have seen me in the midst of my dreams; you will see me now in the midst of my reality; if it is less interesting, if I decline, reader, be just: take my subject's part.



## BOOK XXV

### CHAPTER 2

The years 1815, 1816 in my life – I am appointed a Peer of France –  
My debut at the rostrum – Various speeches

After the King's second return and Bonaparte's final disappearance, the Government being in the hands of Monsieur the Duke of Otranto and Monsieur le Prince de Talleyrand, I was appointed President of the Electoral College for the department of Loiret. The elections of 1815 gave the King the *introuvable* (*unparalleled*) Chamber. Everyone in Orléans made a fuss of me, when the decree which appointed me to the Chamber of Peers arrived. My career as a man of action which had barely commenced suddenly changed direction: what might I have become if I had taken my seat in the Elected Chamber? It is quite probable that a career there, if successful, would have ended with my joining the Interior Ministry, instead of my being led to the Foreign Ministry. My habits and manners were more in tune with the peerage, and though the latter was hostile to me from the first, because of my liberal opinions, it is still the fact that my views on the freedom of the Press and against subservience to foreigners gave that noble Chamber the popularity it enjoyed as long as it tolerated my opinions.

On arrival I received the only honor my colleagues have ever granted me during my fifty years residence among them: I was appointed as one of the four secretaries during the session of 1816. Lord Byron obtained no more favor when he appeared in the Lords, and he chose to distance himself from it forever; I should have gone back to my wilderness.

My debut at the rostrum was a speech on the *permanence of judges*; I praised the principle, but criticized its immediate application. During the Revolution of 1830 the men of the left most committed to that Revolution wished to suspend the decree of permanence for a while.

On the 22nd of February 1816, the Duc de Richelieu brought us the signed will of the former Queen; I mounted the rostrum and said:

*'He who preserved the will of Marie-Antoinette purchased the estate of Montboissier. A judge who tried Louis XVI, he erected on that estate a monument to a defender of Louis XVI; he himself engraved an epitaph in French verse on that monument in praise of Monsieur de Malesherbes. That astonishing impartiality tells us that everything is askew in the moral world.'*

On the 12th of March 1816 the question of ecclesiastical pensions was raised. *'You would refuse food,'* I said, *'to some poor vicar the rest of whose life is consecrated to the altar, and yet you would grant pensions to Joseph Lebon, who made so many heads roll, to Francis Chabot, who demanded a law for émigrés so biased that a child could have sent them to the guillotine, and to Jacques Roux, who, refusing to accept Louis XVI's last testament in the Temple, replied to that unfortunate monarch: 'I am only charged with conducting you to your death.'*

A proposed law regarding the electoral process was brought before the hereditary Chamber; I declared myself in favor of the total renewal of the Chamber of Deputies; it was only in 1824, when a Minister, that I was able to make it law.



It was also during this first speech on electoral law in 1816 that I replied to an adversary: *‘I do not accept what has been said regarding Europe’s interest in our discussions. For myself, Gentlemen, I doubtless owe to the French blood flowing in my veins that impatience I experience when, in order to influence my vote, people speak to me of opinions expressed beyond my country’s borders; if civilized Europe wished to impose the Charter on me, I should go and live at Constantinople.’*

On the 9th of April 1816, I put a proposal to the Chamber regarding the Barbary Pirates. The Chamber decided that it was necessary to concern itself with the matter. I had already thought of opposing forced slavery, before I obtained this favorable decision of the peerage, the first political intervention of a great power in favor of the Greeks: *‘I have viewed the ruins of Carthage;’* I said to my colleagues, *‘I have encountered, among those ruins, the successors to those unfortunate Christians for whose deliverance St Louis sacrificed his life. Philosophy will be able to share in the glory attached to the success of my proposal, and boast of having achieved in an age of enlightenment what religion attempted in vain to achieve in an age of darkness.’*

I had taken my seat in an assembly where, three quarters of the time, my words were turned against me. One can influence a popular Chamber: an aristocratic Chamber is deaf. Away from the rostrum, *in camera*, before those old men, the desiccated remains of the Old Monarchy, the Revolution, and the Empire, what strayed from the most commonplace of tones appeared folly. One day the first row of chairs, close to the rostrum, was filled with respectable Peers, each one deafer than the rest, heads drooping, clasping their ear-trumpets with horns directed towards the rostrum. I put them to sleep, which was natural. One of them let slip his ear-trumpet; his neighbor, woken by the noise, wished, politely, to recover his colleague’s aid; he fell over. The problem was that I began laughing, though I should have been speaking movingly on who knows what touching subject.

The orators who were successful in that Chamber were those who spoke, lacking ideas, in a level monotone, or who had the sense only to be moved by the wretched Ministers. Monsieur de Lally-Tollendal thundered on in favor of public freedoms: he would make our solitary vaults echo, he claimed, in praise of three or four English Lord Chancellors, his ancestors. When his panegyric on the liberty of the Press ended, a *‘but’* emerged dictated by *circumstances*, which *‘but’* kept our honor intact, beneath the beneficial gaze of the censor.

The Restoration gave an impetus to intellectual thought; it freed reflections stifled by Bonaparte: wit, like a caryatid liberated from some building which bowed down its brow, raised its head once more. The Empire struck France mute; liberty, once restored, dubbed her and restored her speech: it discovered talented orators who took up again where Mirabeau and Cazalès had left off, and the Revolution continued its course.

## BOOK XXV

### CHAPTER 3

#### *Monarchy according to the Charter*

My labors were not limited to the rostrum, so new to me. Appalled by the arrangements that were being contemplated and by French ignorance regarding the principles of representative government, I wrote and published *La Monarchie selon la Charte*.

This publication marked one of the great epochs of my political life: it ranked me among the publicists; it served to form public opinion regarding the nature of our government. The English newspapers praised the piece to the skies; over here, even the Abbé Morellet could not get over my change of style and the dogmatic precision of its truths.

*Monarchy according to the Charter* is a constitutional catechism: from it are drawn the majority of propositions advanced as new these days. Thus the principle that the King reigns and does not govern, is found complete in chapters IV to VII on the royal prerogative.

These constitutional principles were set out in the first part of *Monarchy according to the Charter*, in the second part I examined the workings of the three governments which had followed in succession between 1814 and 1816; in this latter part are found various predictions since only too surely verified, and the exposition of doctrines then unrecognized. These words can be found in Chapter XXXVI, of the second part: *'It is taken as read amongst a certain group of people that a revolution of the nature of ours can only end in a change of dynasty; others, more moderate, say in a change in the order of succession to the Crown.'*

As I was completing my work, the decree of the 5th of September 1816 appeared; that measure scattered the few royalists who had gathered to reconstitute the legitimate monarchy. I hastened to write a *postscript* which produced an explosion of anger on the part of Monsieur the Duc de Richelieu, and Monsieur Decazes, Louis XVIII's favorite.

The postscript having been added, I hastened to Monsieur Le Normant, my bookseller; on arrival, I found the gendarmes, with a police commissioner orchestrating things. They had seized various parcels and affixed their seal. I had not braved Bonaparte to be intimidated by Monsieur Decazes: I opposed the seizure; I declared that as a free Frenchman and a Peer of France I would only yield to force: the force arrived and I withdrew. I presented myself on the 18th of September to the Royal notaries, Messieurs Louis-Marthe Mesnier and his colleague; I registered my protest at their office and requested them to record my factual declaration of the seizure of my work, wishing to secure the rights of French citizens by that protest. Monsieur Baude imitated me in 1830.

I next found myself engaged in a long correspondence with Monsieur the Chancellor, Monsieur the Minister of Police, and Monsieur Bellart, the Public Prosecutor, until the 9th of November, the day on which the Chancellor announced a decree rendered in my favor by the tribunal of the first instance, which set me once more in possession of my impounded work. In one of his letters, Monsieur the Chancellor told me that he had been greatly distressed to witness the discontent with my work which the King had expressed publicly. That discontent arose from the chapters where I set myself against the establishment of a government of universal policing in a constitutional country.



BOOK XXV  
CHAPTER 4  
Louis XVIII

In my account of the journey from Ghent, you saw what a worthy scion of Hugh Capet Louis XVIII was; in my text, *Le Roi est mort: vive le Roi!* I have enumerated that Prince's actual qualities. But man is not a single unity: why have so few faithful portraits been produced? Because the model was posed at such and such a period of his life; ten years afterwards, the portrait no longer resembled him.

Louis XVIII did not adopt the long view of objects before and around him; all seemed beautiful or ugly to him according to his angle of vision. Influenced by his century, it is to be feared that religion for that *Very Christian King* was only a suitable elixir in which to mix the compounds from which royalty was constituted. The free-thinking spirit he had inherited from his grandfather might have presented a barrier to his undertakings; but he was self-aware, and when he spoke in an assertive manner, he took pride in making fun of himself. I spoke to him one day about the necessity of Monsieur le Duc de Bourbon marrying afresh, to bring new life to the Condé line: he approved strongly of the idea, though he cared little about the aforesaid revival; but in that regard he spoke to me of Monsieur le Comte d'Artois saying: *'My brother could marry without any alteration in the succession to the throne, he only produces younger sons; as for me, I only produce older ones: I do not wish to disinherit Monsieur le Duc d'Angoulême.'* And he puffed out his breast with a capable mocking air; but I did not intend to quarrel with the King about power.

An unprejudiced egoist, Louis XVIII desired peace at any price: he supported his ministers as long as they commanded a majority: he dismissed them as soon as their majority was overturned, and there was a risk of his rest being disturbed; he did not mind retreating if, with a view to achieving victory, he had been obliged to take a step forward. His greatness was in patience; he did not advance towards events, events came to meet him.

Without being cruel, the King was not *humane*: catastrophic tragedies neither astonished nor moved him: he contented himself with saying to the Duc de Berry, who apologized for having had the misfortune to trouble the King's rest in dying: *'I slept straight through.'* Yet that calm individual, when he was annoyed, indulged in terrible rages; and this Prince, so cold, so insensitive, had relationships which resembled passions: thus there succeeded in his intimacy the Comte d'Avaray, Monsieur de Blacas, Monsieur Decazes, Madame de Balbi, and Madame du Cayla; all these beloved personages were favorites; unfortunately they kept far too many letters in their hands.

Louis XVIII appears to us clothed in all the depths of historic tradition; he displayed the favoritism of former royalty. Is there some void in the hearts of solitary monarchs which they fill with the first object they find? Is it empathy, affinity with a nature analogous to theirs? Is it a friendship that heaven sends them to console their greatness? Is it an inclination towards a slave who gives body and soul, before whom one conceals nothing, a slave who becomes a garment, a plaything, an obsession linked to every feeling, every taste, every whim of him to whom the slave submits, and whom the slave holds power over through an unbreakable fascination? The more submissive and intimate the favorite has been, the less easily can that favorite be dismissed, being in possession of secrets which would embarrass if they were divulged: the one preferred acquires a dual power from depravity, and from the master's weaknesses.

When the favorite happens to be a great man, like the obsessive Richelieu or the irreplaceable Mazarin, nations, while detesting him, profit from his glory and his power; they merely exchange a wretched king in law for an illustrious king in fact.

BOOK XXV  
CHAPTER 5  
Monsieur Decazes

As soon as Monsieur Decazes was appointed a Minister, carriages jammed the Quai Malaquais each evening, to deposit whatever was noblest of the Faubourg Saint-Germain at the newcomer's salon. The Frenchman has to do things well, he can never be merely a courtier; no matter what it is, as long as it will make him a power to be reckoned with.

A formidable coalition of idiocies soon formed around a new favorite. In a democratic society, you can chatter about liberty, claim that you can foresee the course of the human race and the future of things, while winning a few prize medals with your speeches, and you are sure of your place; in an aristocratic society, play whist, churn out commonplaces and pre-conceived witticisms with a profound and serious air, and your talent is assured of good fortune.

A compatriot of Murat, but a Murat without a kingdom, Monsieur Decazes came to us courtesy of Napoleon's mother. He was friendly, obliging, and never insolent; he wished me well, I do not know why, since I was indifferent: from that arose the beginning of my problems. It was to teach me that one must never show lack of respect to a favorite. The King lavished kindnesses and wealth on him, and married him later to a very well-born lady, the daughter of Monsieur de Sainte-Aulaire. It is true that Monsieur Decazes served royalty almost too well; it was he who unearthed Marshal Ney in the mountains of the Auvergne where he was hiding.

Faithful to his ideas of royalty, Louis XVIII said of Monsieur Decazes: '*I will elevate him such that he will be envied by the greatest of lords.*' That phrase, borrowed from another king, was merely an anachronism: to elevate others one must be certain not to descend oneself; now, at the period Louis XVIII had reached, what were monarchs? If they could still make a man's fortune, they could not make him great; they were no more than their favorites' bankers.

Madame Princeteau, sister of Monsieur Decazes, was a pleasant, modest, excellent person; the King was infatuated with the prospect of her. Monsieur Decazes the elder, whom I saw in the throne-room in full dress, sword at his side, hat under his arm, nevertheless had no success.

Finally, the death of Monsieur the Duc de Berry increased hostility on all sides and led to the favorite's fall. I said that *his feet were slippery with blood*, which did not signify, God forbid, that he was guilty of murder, but that he fell into that crimson sea which formed beneath Louvel's knife.

## BOOK XXV

### CHAPTER 6

I am struck off the list of Ministers of State – I sell my books and La Vallée

I resisted the seizure of *La Monarchie selon la Charte* in order to shed light on the abuse of royal power, and to defend freedom of thought and the Press; I had freely embraced our institutions, and remained faithful to them.

These troubles being over, I was left bloodstained from the wounds dealt me on publication of my pamphlet. I was unable to take possession of my political career without scars from the blows I received on entering that career: I felt ill, I could not breathe.

A little while later, a decree signed Richelieu struck me off the list of Ministers of State, and I was deprived of a position which until then had been considered permanent; it had been granted to me at Ghent, and the pension attached to the position was withdrawn: the hand which had welcomed Fouché struck at me.

I have had the honor of being despoiled by the Legitimacy on three occasions: the first time, for having followed the scions of Saint Louis into exile; the second, for having written in support of the principles of monarchy *by consent*; the third time, for ruining myself in accord with a disastrous law at the moment when I was about to achieve a military triumph: the soldiers of the country of Spain had returned to the white banner, and if I had been left in office, I should have extended our frontier to the banks of the Rhine once more.

My nature makes me totally indifferent to loss of office; I was reduced to going on foot again and, on wet days, taking a cab to the Chamber of Peers. In my public vehicle, protected by the rabble which travelled around me, I returned to the laws of the proletariat of whom I now made one: from the height of my fiacre I could look down on the processions of kings.

I was obliged to sell my books: Monsieur Merlin put them up for auction at the Sylvestre Room, on the Rue des Bons-Enfants. I kept only a little Homer in Greek, in whose margins were attempts at translation and comments written in my own hand. Soon I had to cut back; I asked Monsieur the Minister of the Interior for permission to sell my country house by lottery: the lottery was inaugurated at the offices of Monsieur Denis, the notary. There were ninety tickets at 1000 francs each: the Royalists would not take up the tickets; Madame the Dowager Duchesse d'Orléans, took three; my friend Monsieur Lainé, Minister of the Interior, who had signed the decree of 5th September and agreed to my erasure in council, took a fourth ticket, under a false name. The money was returned to the subscribers; however, Monsieur Lainé refused to reclaim his 1000 francs; he left it with the notary to be given to the poor.

A short while afterwards, my Vallé-aux-Loups was sold, as the poor sell their furniture, at the Place Chatelet. I suffered a great deal on that sale; I was fond of my trees, planted and growing, so to speak, with my memories. The offer price was 50,000 francs; it was accepted by Monsieur le Vicomte de Montmorency, who alone dared to overbid by a hundred francs: the Vallé was his. He has since taken possession of my retreat: it is not wise to be involved with my fate: that virtuous man is no more.

## BOOK XXV

### CHAPTER 7

Further speeches of mine in 1817 and 1818

After the publication of *Monarchy according to the Charter*, and at the opening of the new session in November 1816, I continued my struggle. In the Chambers of Peers on the 23rd of that month, I put forward a proposal by which the King was humbly implored to have investigations made into what had transpired during the recent elections. The corruption and force employed by the government in those elections had been flagrant.

Regarding my opinion on a legal matter relating to the finances (the 21st of March 1817), I objected to item XI of that proposal: it concerned the intention to allocate the State forests to a sinking fund, and the desire then to sell off a hundred and fifty thousand hectares. These forests comprised three sorts of property: the ancient domains of the Crown, several Commanderies of the Order of Malta and the remaining Church assets. I am not sure why, even today, I take a melancholy interest in my words; they find echoes in my *Memoirs*:

*‘With all due respect to those who have only been administrators during the troubles, it is not material tokens, but the morals of a nation that create public credit. Will the new owners be worthy of their new properties? They will be called to account for despoiling these, the legacies of nine centuries stolen from their former possessors. Instead of those immutable patrimonies in which the same family lived, like a succession of oak trees, you will have disposable properties where the reeds scarcely have time to grow and die before they have changed masters. Houses will cease to be the guardians of domestic morality; they will lose their traditional authority; highways open to all comers, they will no longer be consecrated, as ancestral seats and cradles of the new-born.*

*Peers of France, it is your cause I plead here and not mine: I speak to you on behalf of your children; I shall have no concern with posterity; I have no children; I have lost my father’s estate, and the few trees I have planted will soon be mine no longer.’*



BOOK XXV  
CHAPTER 8  
Meetings at Piet's

Due to a meeting of minds, a close one at that time, camaraderie was established between the minority groupings in both Chambers. France educated itself concerning representative government: as I was so foolish as to stick to the letter of it, and felt a veritable passion for it, to my detriment, I supported those who espoused it, without concerning myself as to whether they exhibited in their opposition more of human motive than the pure love I conceived for the Charter; not that I was a complete fool, but I did idealize my mistress, and I would have traversed the flames to take her in my arms. It was during this constitutional fit, in 1816, that I met Monsieur de Villèle. He was calmer; he controlled his ardor; he also intended to win freedom; but he laid siege by rule; he cut trenches methodically; while I, who desired to assault the place, I scaled ladders and was often hurled down into the moat.

I encountered Monsieur de Villèle for the first time at the Duchesse de Lévis'. He had become leader of the Royalist opposition in the elected Chamber, as I was in the hereditary Chamber. Monsieur de Corbière was a friend of his. That gentleman never left his side, and people spoke of *Villèle and Corbière*, as one says *Orestes and Pylades*, or *Euryalus and Nisus*.

To enter into fastidious detail regarding people whose names one will have forgotten tomorrow would be a foolish vanity. Obscure and tedious events, that one thinks of immense interest, and that interest no one; past machinations, that led to no major outcome, ought to be left to those happy optimists who consider themselves to be or have been the world's object of attention.

Yet there were moments of pride when my arguments with Monsieur de Villèle seemed to me like the dissension between Marius and Sulla, or Caesar and Pompey. With the other members of the opposition, we quite often went to the Rue Thérèse, to spend the evening in discussion at Monsieur Piet's. We would arrive in an extremely ugly mood, and would sit round the walls of a salon lit by a lamp which smoked. In that legislative fog, we talked of proposed laws, motions to be enacted, of approaches to be made to the secretariat, the administration, and various commissions. There was criticism on all sides. We looked considerably like those assemblies of the early church, as depicted by the enemies of the faith: we spewed out the direst news; we declared that things must change, that Rome would be troubled by division, that our armies would be defeated.

Monsieur de Villèle listened, summarized and concluded nothing: he was a great aid to business; a cautious sailor, he never set out to sea during a storm, and though he would enter a known harbor, skillfully, he could never have discovered the New World. I often remarked, regarding our discussions about the sale of church assets, that the most Christian among us were the most ardent in defending the constitutional position. Religion is a source of freedom: in Rome, the *flamen dialis* only wore a hollow ring on his finger, because a solid ring might suggest a link of chain; on his clothing and his cap Jupiter's high priest allowed no knots.

After a meeting, Monsieur de Villèle would withdraw, accompanied by Monsieur de Corbière. During those meetings, I studied many individuals, learnt many things, and occupied myself with the many subjects of our get-togethers: I was initiated into the elements of finance, something that I always sweated over; the army, the judicial system, and the administration. I left those conferences a little more of a

Statesman and a little more persuaded of the poverty of all such science. All night long, half-asleep, I saw bald heads in various attitudes, the faces of those Solons, with various expressions on their visages, disarranged and separated from their bodies: it was all very respectable for sure; but I preferred the swallow that woke me in my youth and *the Muses* who filled my dreams: the rays of dawn, striking the swans in flight, that cast the shadows of those white birds onto a gilded wave; the rising sun appearing to me in Syria at the crest of a palm tree, as if in a phoenix's nest, delighted me more.

BOOK XXV  
CHAPTER 9  
*The Conservateur*

I felt that my battles at the rostrum, in a closed Chamber, and in the midst of an assembly which was poorly disposed towards me, were an ineffective path to victory and that I needed another weapon. Censorship of the daily papers having been established, I could only fulfil my aim by means of a free paper, published irregularly, by the aid of which I could attack both the governmental system and the extreme left-wing opinions expressed by Monsieur Étienne in the *Minerve*. In the summer of 1818, I was at Noisiel, the home of Madame the Duchesse de Lévis, where my publisher Monsieur Le Normant came to see me. I explained the idea which preoccupied me; he took fire, offering to run all the risks and cover all the costs. I spoke to my friends Messieurs de Bonald and de Lamennais, asking them if they would collaborate with me: they agreed, and the paper soon appeared under the name of the *Conservateur*.

That newspaper caused an extraordinary revolution: in France it affected the majority in the two Chambers; abroad it transformed government attitudes.

Thus the Royalists did me the favor of emerging from the nothingness into which they had fallen *vis-à-vis* nations and kings. I set a pen in the hands of the greatest families of France. I presented the Montmorencys and Lévis as journalists; I summoned the arrière-ban, and made feudalism march to the aid of the freedom of the Press. I brought together once more the most brilliant lights of the Royalist party, Messieurs de Villèle, de Corbière, de Vitrolles, de Castelbajac etc. I could not help blessing Providence every time I draped the red robe of a Prince of the Church over the *Conservateur* to act as a cover, or had the pleasure of reading an article signed in full: the *Cardinal de La Luzerne*. But it so happened that after leading my knights to the constitutional crusade, as soon as they had overcome power and delivered freedom, as soon as they had become princes of Edessa, Antioch and Damascus, they shut themselves in their new States with Eleanor of Aquitaine and left me to mope at the foot of the wall of Jerusalem where the infidels had recaptured the Holy Tomb.

My polemic, begun in the *Conservateur*, lasted from 1818 until 1820 that is to say until the re-establishment of censorship, for which the pretext was the death of the Duc de Berry. At this first stage of my polemic, I brought about the fall of the current minister and brought Monsieur de Villèle to power.

I began speaking out immediately after the Hundred Days; it was then that I set about educating Royalists in the constitution. After 1824, when I took up the pen again in pamphlets and in the *Journal des Débats*, the situation had altered. Yet what did they matter to me, those wretched futilities, to me who have never believed in the times in which I have lived; to me who might have belonged to the past, to me without faith in kings, lacking conviction in nationalism, to me who never cared for anything but dreams, on condition however that they did not last longer than a night!

The first article in the *Conservateur* sketched out the state of affairs at the moment when I entered the lists. During the two years the newspaper existed, I depicted successively the events of the day, and examined key interests. I had occasion to note the cowardice represented by that *private correspondence* which the Paris police had published in London. Those *private correspondences* might libel, but they could not dishonour: what is base has no power to debase; honor alone can inflict dishonor.

*‘Anonymous calumniators’* I proclaimed, *‘have the courage to state who you are; a little shame is soon overcome; add your surname to your articles, it will only add one despicable word more.’*

I sometimes made fun of Ministers and I expressed that ironic tendency that I always disapprove of in myself.

The *Conservateur* of the 5th of December 1818 contained a serious article concerning the morality of various interests and the morality of duty: from that article, which made a stir, derives the phraseology concerning *moral interests* and *material interests*, first mooted by me, and then adopted by everyone. Here it is, highly abridged; elevated beyond the usual level of a newspaper, it is one of my works to which my reason ascribes some value. It has not aged, because the ideas it contains are timeless.

## BOOK XXV

### CHAPTER 10

#### *On the Morality of Material Interests and that of Duty*

*‘The Government has invented a new morality, that of interests; that of duty has been abandoned to imbeciles. Now, this morality of interests, on which they wish to found our administration, has corrupted the nation more in the space of three years than the Revolution did in a quarter of a century.*

*What destroys morality among nations, and with morality those nations themselves, is not violence, but seduction; and by seduction I mean that which all false doctrine contains of the flattering and the specious. Men often mistake error for truth, because every faculty of feeling or intellect has its false representation: calmness resembles virtue, rationalization reason, emptiness depth, and so on.*

*The eighteenth century was a destructive century; we were all seduced. We distorted politics; we distracted ourselves with culpable novelties while searching for social reality in a corruption of morals. The Revolution arrived to awaken us: dragging the Frenchman from his bed, it hurled him into his grave. However, the Reign of Terror is perhaps, of all the stages of the Revolution, that which was least dangerous to morality, because no conscience was constrained: the crime was in its freedom. Orgies drenched in blood, scandals which no longer had the power to shock; all was there. The nation’s women set to their tasks around the murderous mechanism as if it were their fireside: the scaffolds constituted public morality, and death the basis of government. Nothing was clearer than each man’s position: no one spoke of specialists, or affirmation, or a system of interests. All this gibberish produced by petty minds and bad consciences was unknown. They said to a man: ‘you are a royalist, noble, and wealthy: die’: and he died. Antonelli wrote that there were no charges made out against such prisoners, they were condemned as aristocrats: a monstrous indulgence which nevertheless left the moral order untouched; since it is not killing the innocent as innocents which destroys society, it is killing them as though they were guilty.*

*As a consequence, those terrible times were times of great devotion. Women marched heroically then, to torment; fathers gave themselves up to protect their sons, sons to protect their fathers; unexpected help was given in prison, and the priest, being sought, consoled the victim beside an executioner who did not acknowledge him.*

*Morality under the Directory had to combat the corruption of manners rather than that of doctrine; there was excess. One was flung into pleasure as one had been crammed into prison; one compelled the present to produce an advance on future joy, for fear of seeing the past reborn. Not yet having had time to create a place to live, everyone lived in the street, on the promenades, in the public rooms. Familiar with scaffolds, and already half beyond the world, one found it scarcely worthwhile going home. It was not merely a question of arts, dances, fashions; one changed clothes and jewelry as easily as one was stripped of life.*

*Under Bonaparte the seduction began again, but it was a seduction which brought with it its own remedy: Bonaparte seduced us with the power of glory, and everything great carries a legislative principle within itself. He thought it useful to allow the doctrine of all nations to be taught, the morality of all ages, the religion of all eternity.*

*I would not be astonished to hear the reply: To found society on a duty is to erect it on a fiction; to root it in self-interest is to establish it on a reality. Now, it is precisely duty that is a fact, and self-interest that is a fiction. Duty which has its source in the Divinity descends to the family, where it establishes a real relationship between father and children; from there, passing into society and separating into two branches, it regulates the relations between king and subject; it establishes in the moral order the chain of service and protection, benefit and gratitude.*

*There is then no more positive fact than duty, since it gives human society the sole durable existence it can possess.*

*Self-interest on the contrary is a fiction when it is taken as it is today, in the rigorous and physical sense, since it is no longer in the evening what it was in the morning, since it changes its nature at every instant, since founded on wealth it is possessed of variability.*

*According to the morality of self-interest, every citizen is in a state of hostility regarding the law and the government, because in society it is always the majority who suffer. No one fights for abstract ideas of order, peace or country; or if they do fight for them, it is because they attach the idea of sacrifice to them: then the morality of self-interest is left behind to return to that of duty: so true is it that society cannot be found to exist outside that sacred boundary!*

*He who does his duty attracts esteem; he who yields to self-interest is esteemed little. It is a fine thing for the age to extract a principle of government from a source of contempt! Raise politicians to think only of what affects them, and you will see how they will run the State; in that way you will only obtain corrupt greedy ministers, like those mutilated slaves who governed the later Roman Empire who sold everything, remembering that they had been sold themselves.*

*Note this: self-interest only has power while it still prospers; if times grow hard, it is enfeebled. Duty, on the contrary, is never as energetic as when there is a cost involved in fulfilling it. When times are good, it becomes slack. I like a principle of government which thrives on misfortune: that to a great extent resembles virtue.*

*What is more absurd than to tell people: Don't show devotion! Don't betray enthusiasm! Don't think of anything but your own interests! It is as though you said to them: Don't come to our aid, abandon us, if that is in your interest! With that profound approach to politics, when the hour for sacrifice arrives everyone locks their doors, rushes to the window, and watches the monarchy go by.'*

*Such was my article on the morality of self-interest and the morality of duty.*

On the 3rd of December 1819, I mounted the rostrum of the Chamber of Peers once more: I spoke against the false Frenchmen who would give us as a symbol of peace our surveillance by the European powers. 'Do we have need of guardians? Are we still to be the victim of circumstances? Ought we then to receive, via diplomatic notes, certificates of good conduct? And have we merely changed a garrison of Cossacks for a garrison of ambassadors?'

From that time on I spoke of foreigners as I have since spoken of them during the war in Spain; I dreamt of our freedom at a time when even the liberals opposed me. Men of opposing opinions make a great

noise, merely to arrive at silence! Let a few years pass, and the actors leave the scene and the spectators are no longer there to criticize or applaud.

## BOOK XXV

### CHAPTER 11

#### My Life in 1820 – The Death of the Duc de Berry

I was retiring to bed on the evening of the 13th of February, when the Marquis de Vibraye arrived to tell me of the assassination of the Duc de Berry. In his hurry, he forgot to tell me where the event had occurred. I rose in haste and climbed into Monsieur de Vibraye's carriage. I was surprised to see the coachman take the Rue de Richelieu, and more astonished still when he stopped at the Opéra: the crowd outside was immense. We ascended, between two lines of soldiers, by the side entrance on the left, and, as we were dressed as Peers, we were allowed to pass. We arrived at a kind of little antechamber: this space was crammed with everyone from the palace. I edged my way to the door of a box and found myself face to face with Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans. I was struck by the ill-concealed expression of jubilation in his eyes, though he imposed on himself an almost apologetic countenance: he saw himself closer to the throne. My gaze embarrassed him; he left the box and turned his back on me. Around me the details of the hideous crime were being recounted, the name of the perpetrator, the conjectures of various people involved in his arrest; everyone was agitated, busied: men love a spectacle, especially one involving death, when that death involves the great. Everyone who emerged from the blood-stained laboratory was asked for news. General Alexandre de Girardin was heard to tell of how he had been left for dead on the field of battle, and was not in the least recovered from his wounds: he hoped for such and such, consoled himself with such and such, grieved at such and such. Soon silence overcame the crowd; a hush fell; from the interior of the box issued a slight sound: I put my ear to the door; I made out a groaning noise; the noise ceased: the royal family had arrived to receive the last sigh of a scion of Louis XIV! I entered immediately.

Imagine an empty theatre, after a tragic disaster: the curtain raised, the orchestra pit deserted, the lights extinguished, the machinery still, the scenery motionless and shadowy, the actors, singers, dancers vanished through their trapdoors and secret passages! The royal line of Saint Louis expired behind a mask, in a place that incurred the Church's wrath, among carnival debauchery.

In another work I have presented the life and death of Monsieur le Duc de Berry. My reflections, then, are still valid today:

*'A descendant of St Louis, last shoot of the ancient branch, escapes from long exile and returns to his own land; he begins to taste some happiness; he flatters himself in imagining himself reborn, in imagining the monarchy reborn also, in the children God has promised him: suddenly he is struck down in the midst of those hopes, almost in his wife's arms. He is to die, and he is still young! Should he not accuse Heaven, demanding of it why it treats him with such harshness? Ah, it would be pardonable in him to complain of his fate! For what evil has he done, indeed? He has lived informally among us in perfect simplicity; he has joined in our pleasures and eased our pains; six of his relatives have perished already; why murder him now, why seek him out, innocent as he is, so far from the throne, twenty-seven years after the death of Louis XVI? Let us understand the heart of this Bourbon more deeply! That heart, pierced by a dagger, has never raised a single murmur against us: not one regret regarding his life; not one bitter word has been pronounced by this Prince. Husband, son, father and brother, prey to all the agonies of the soul, all the sufferings of the flesh, he has never ceased asking pardon for the man, whom he will not even call his assassin! The most impetuous of characters suddenly becomes the most gentle. A man bound to*



*life by all the heart's ties; a prince in the flower of his years; an heir to the finest earthly kingdom is dying, and you might call him unfortunate indeed who has nothing to lose down here.'*

The murderer Louvel was a young man of sly and unpleasant aspect, such as you see in their thousands in the streets of Paris. He was ill-tempered; he had an aggressive and solitary manner. It is probable that Louvel belonged to no secret society; he was a sectarian not a plotter; he belonged to one of those idealistic conspiracies, whose members may sometimes meet, but often act alone, pursuing their own individual motives. His mind nourished a single idea, like a heart intoxicated with one sole passion. His action was a consequence of his principles: he wished to destroy the whole royal race at a single blow. Louvel has his admirers just as Robespierre does. Our material society, an accomplice in every material enterprise, has quickly destroyed the chapel created in expiation of that crime. We have a horror of moral feeling, because within it the enemy and the accuser are revealed: tears would seem like a recrimination; they hastened to take away the cross from some Christians because of their weeping.

On the 18th of February 1820, the Conservateur paid its tribute of regret in memory of Monsieur le Duc de Berry. The article ended with this line from Racine:

*'If only some drop of our royal blood has escaped!'*

Alas! That drop of blood has fallen onto foreign soil!

Monsieur Decazes fell from office. Censorship returned, and despite the assassination of the Duc de Berry, I voted against it: not wishing it to tarnish the reputation of the Conservateur, that journal effectively ended with this apostrophe on the Duc de Berry.

*'Christian Prince! Worthy scion of St Louis! Illustrious offspring of so many monarchs, before you descend to your last resting place, receive our last homage. You read and enjoyed a publication that the censor is about to destroy. You told us several times that its publication saved the throne: alas, we were unable to save your life! We are ceasing to write at the moment when you have ceased to exist: we have the sad consolation of marking the end of our labors with the ending of your life.'*

## BOOK XXV

### CHAPTER 12

#### The Birth of the Duke of Bordeaux – The Women of Bordeaux Market

Monsieur the Duc de Bordeaux entered the world on the 29th of September 1820. The newly-born infant was called the *child of Europe* and *the miraculous child*: nonetheless he would become the child of exile.

Some time before the Princess went into labor, three women of the Bordeaux market had a cradle made, and, on behalf of all their companions, chose me to present it, and them, to the Duchesse de Berry. Mesdames Dasté, Duranton, and Rivaille, arrived. I hastened to ask the gentleman in the Duchess' service to ask for an audience according to etiquette. Behold, Monsieur de Sèze considered the right to such an honor belonged to him: it was said that I would never succeed at Court. I was still not reconciled with the government, and I did not appear to be worthy of the task of introducing my humble ambassadresses. I emerged from this grand negotiation as usual, by paying their expenses.

It all became an affair of State; the title-tattle concerning it made the newspapers. The ladies from Bordeaux, having heard of it, wrote the following letter to me, on the subject:

*‘Bordeaux, the 24th of October 1820.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*We owe you thanks for your goodness in having placed our delight and respect at the feet of Madame la Duchesse de Berry: on this occasion at least no one will prevent you from acting as our interpreter. We have read with the greatest unhappiness the fuss Monsieur le Comte de Sèze has made, in the newspapers; and if we have kept silence, it was for fear of giving you pain. However, Monsieur le Vicomte, no one can be better equipped than you are to pay homage to the truth and correct Monsieur de Sèze's error regarding our true intentions in our choice of someone to present us to her Royal Highness. We offer to relate everything that has occurred, in a journal of your choice; and, as no one has the right to select our guide, and even to the last moment we flattered ourselves that you would be that guide, what we would state in that regard would necessarily silence everyone.*

*That is what we have decided, Monsieur le Vicomte; but we thought it was our duty to do nothing without your agreement. Be assured that we would willingly publish, to the world, the details of the fine things you have done regarding the question of our being presented. If we have been a cause of anxiety, we are ready to repair the damage.*

*We are, and will be forever,*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*Your very humble and respectful servants,*

*Mesdames DASTÉ, DURANTON, RIVAILLE.’*

I replied to these generous women, who so little resembled the great ladies:

*'Thank you, dear ladies, for the offer you have made of publishing in a newspaper all that happened regarding Monsieur de Sèze. You are royalists, par excellence, and I too am a good royalist: we must remember above all that Monsieur de Sèze is a respectable man, and has been a defender of our King. That fine action is not erased by a trifling moment of vanity. Let us keep silent: I am satisfied with your good opinion of me among your friends. I have already thanked you for the excellent fruit: Madame de Chateaubriand and I eat the chestnuts every day and speak of you.*

*Now permit your host to embrace you. My wife sends her compliments, and I am:*

*Your servant and friend.*

*CHATEAUBRIAND.*

*Paris, the 2nd of November 1820.'*

But who thinks of those futile arguments these days? The joy and the feasting of that baptismal day are far behind us. When Henri was born on St Michael's day, would one not have thought that the archangel had trodden the dragon underfoot? It is to be feared, on the contrary, that the flaming sword was only drawn from its sheath to drive the innocent from the terrestrial paradise, and close the gates against them.

## BOOK XXV

### CHAPTER 13

I assist Monsieur de Villèle and Monsieur de Corbière to their first Ministry – My letter to the Duc de Richelieu – A note from the Duc de Richelieu and my reply – A note from Monsieur de Polignac – Letters from Monsieur de Montmorency and Monsieur de Pasquier

However, the complication of events had still resolved nothing. The assassination of Monsieur the Duc de Berry had led to the fall of Monsieur Decazes, which did not happen without a wrench. Monsieur the Duc de Richelieu would only consent to grieve his old master after a promise from Monsieur Pasquier of Monsieur Decazes' receiving a foreign mission. He left for the London embassy where I was to replace him. Everything was incomplete. Monsieur de Villèle remained on the sidelines with his shadow, Monsieur de Corbière. I for my part presented a considerable obstacle. Madame de Montcalm never ceased urging me to make peace: I was very well disposed to do so, only wishing sincerely to emerge from the problems which enveloped me and for which I had a sovereign contempt. Monsieur de Villèle, though more flexible, was not easy to handle at that time.

There are two ways to become a minister; the one way is brusquely and by force, the other is by patience and skill; the first method was not Monsieur de Villèle's approach: cunning excludes energy, but it is more certain and less likely to lose the position it gains. The essentials of this latter method are to accept many rebuffs, and to know how to swallow a tangle of snakes: Monsieur de Talleyrand made great use of this second system for satisfying his ambitions. In general, one achieves an entry into office by means of the mediocre elements in one's character, and remains there because of the superior ones. This combination of opposing factors is a rare thing, and that is why there are so few Statesmen.

Monsieur de Villèle had precisely the sort of down-to-earth qualities which opened the door for him: he ignored the noise around him, in order to gather the fruits of the fear that had gripped the Court. Now and then he made bellicose speeches, but ones where various phrases allowed optimism of a reasonable nature to shine forth. I considered that a man of that type ought to begin by attaining office, no matter how, and in not too precarious a position. It seemed to me that he ought first to become a minister without portfolio, in order to obtain the Presidency of that same administration one day. That would give him a reputation for moderation, which would suit him perfectly; it would appear evident that the royalist opposition leader in parliament was unambitious, since he would have consented to reign himself in for the benefit of peace. Every man who has been a Minister, no matter by what title, becomes one again: a first ministry is a rung on the ladder to a second; the individual who has worn the embroidered coat retains the odor of his portfolio, which sooner or later finds him again in office.

Madame de Montcalm told me, on her brother's behalf, that there were no Ministries vacant; but that if my two friends wished to enter the government as Ministers of State without portfolio, the King would be delighted, promising something better later. She added that if I consented to go abroad, I would be sent to Berlin. I replied that it was entirely up to him; as for myself I was always ready to leave and that I would go to the devil if it were the case that kings had some mission to fulfil with their cousin; but that I would only accept exile if Monsieur de Villèle accepted a position on the Council. I also wished to obtain a place for Monsieur Lainé alongside my two friends. I charged myself with this threefold negotiation. I had become the master of French politics through my own efforts. One can scarcely doubt that it was I who

achieved Monsieur de Villèle's first Ministerial appointment, and I who promoted that Mayor of Toulouse's career.

I found unconquerable obstinacy to be an element in Monsieur Lainé's character. Monsieur de Corbière did not simply wish to enter the Council; I flattered him with the expectation that the position would also involve the Public Education portfolio. Monsieur de Villèle alone went along with my wishes with repugnance, first raising a thousand objections; his fine intellect and his ambition at last made him agree to move forward: all was arranged. Here is the irrefutable proof of what I have just said; tedious documents full of small matters which have rightly passed into oblivion, but useful to my own history:

'20th of December, 3.30pm

TO MONSIEUR THE DUC DE RICHELIEU

*I have had the honor of passing by your house, Monsieur le Duc, to give you an account of the state of affairs: all is going on marvelously. I have seen our two friends: Villèle at last consents to become a Minister as a Secretary of State for the Council, without portfolio, if Corbière will consent to do the same, with the same title, and with control of the Education portfolio. Corbière, for his part, is very happy to accept those conditions, assuming Villèle's agreement. Thus there is no longer a difficulty. Complete your labors, Monsieur le Duc; see our two friends; and when you have heard what I have written from their own mouths, you can render France peaceful internally, as you have given her peace abroad.*

*Allow me to suggest a further idea to you: would you find it a great inconvenience to grant Monsieur de Villèle the post left vacant by Monsieur de Barante's retirement? He would then be placed in a position more equal to that of his friend. However, he has stated to me in positive terms that he will consent to enter the Council, without portfolio, if Corbière takes Education. I only say this as a means of satisfying the Royalists more completely, and securing you an immense and unshakeable majority.*

*Lastly I have the honor to draw to your attention that tomorrow evening the grand reunion of Royalists takes place at Piet's, and it would be very useful if our two friends could say something tomorrow evening which might calm the excitement and prevent any division.*

*As I am not involved, Monsieur le Duc, in the outcome of all this, you will, I hope, interpret my eagerness merely as the loyalty of a man who desires his country's good and your success.*

*Accept, I beg you, Monsieur le Duc, the assurance of my highest regard.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

'Wednesday.

*I have just written to Messieurs de Villèle and de Corbière, Monsieur, and committed them to spending the evening with me, since in so vital a matter not a moment should be lost. I must thank you for having progressed everything so swiftly; I trust that we will achieve a satisfactory conclusion. Be assured, Monsieur of the pleasure I take in being under this obligation to you, and receive the assurance of my highest regard.*

RICHELIEU.'

*‘Allow me to congratulate you, Monsieur le Duc, on the happy outcome of this important matter, and to applaud myself for having played a part in it all. It would be very desirable for the announcement to be made tomorrow: it would put an end to all opposition. In that connection, I can be useful to our two friends.*

*I have the honor, Monsieur le Duc, to renew my assurance to you of my highest regard.*

*CHATEAUBRIAND.’*

*‘Friday.*

*I have received with extreme pleasure the note which Monsieur le Vicomte de Chateaubriand has done me the honor of writing to me. I think he will have nothing to repent of in his reliance on the King’s kindness, and, if he will permit me to so add, on the desire I have of contributing to whatever might be agreeable to him. I beg him to accept the assurance of my highest regard.*

*RICHELIEU.’*

*‘Thursday.*

*My noble colleague, you will no doubt be aware that the business has been concluded this evening at eleven, and all is settled on the basis agreed between you and the Duc de Richelieu. Your intervention has been very helpful to us: thanks are due to you for this step towards the improvement in the situation that from now on can be considered likely.*

*Yours throughout life,*

*J. DE POLIGNAC.’*

*‘Paris, Wednesday the 20th of December, 11.30 at night.*

*I have just visited your house where you are asleep, dear Vicomte: I came from Villèle who himself returned late from the meeting which you arranged and of which you had informed him. He asked me, as your nearest neighbor, to let you know what Corbiere also wishes to inform you of, namely that the business of the day that you primarily conducted and managed has finally been agreed in the simplest and briefest manner: he without portfolio, his friend taking Education. He seemed to think that, by waiting a little, further conditions could have been exacted; but he agreed not to thwart a spokesman and negotiator such as you. Truly you have opened up a new career for them both: they count on you to make all smooth for them. On your side, during the little time in which we yet have the advantage of your being among us, speak to your most energetic friends on the subject of furthering or at least not hindering the project of closer union. Good night. I further compliment you on the promptness with which you led the negotiation. You will arrange matters in Germany thus, so as to return the more swiftly to your friends. I am delighted, for my part, in the improvement in your own situation.*

*I reaffirm all my sentiments towards you.*

*‘MONSIEUR DE MONTMORENCY.’*

*'Here is, Monsieur, a request addressed by a Guard of the King's Corps to the King of Prussia: it has been handed to me on the recommendation of a senior Guards officer. I beg you to take it with you and make use of it, if you believe, when you have had a little time to examine the situation in Berlin, that it is of the kind to command any chance of success.*

*It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity of congratulating you and myself on this morning's Moniteur, and to thank you for the part you played in this happy outcome which, I hope, will have a fortunate influence on the affairs of France.*

*Please accept the assurance of my highest regard and my sincere attachment.*

PASQUIER.'

This sequence of notes shows that I am not over-egging my activities; it was a great bother to me to buzz around like that; *the shafts* or *the coachman's nose* are not places I ever had the ambition to perch on: whether the coach arrives at the top, or rolls back down to the bottom, matters little to me. Accustomed to living concealed in my own depths, or momentarily in the wider life of the centuries, I have no taste for the mysteries of the antechamber. I fail badly when circulating as a piece of today's coinage; to protect myself I withdraw closer to God; a preoccupation sent from above isolates you, and makes everything around you die away.

**End of Book XXV**

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 1

My life in 1821 – The Berlin Embassy – Arrival in Berlin – Monsieur Ancillon – The Royal Family – Celebrations for Grand-Duke Nicholas' marriage – Berlin

I departed France, leaving my friends in possession of posts which I had purchased for them at the price of my own absence: I was a lesser Lycurgus. What was fine about it was that the first trial of my own political strength that I had attempted had set me at liberty; I was about to enjoy that freedom abroad in a position of power. At the heart of this new situation for me, I saw romance, of a kind, confused with the reality: was there nothing in court life? Were there not solitudes of another kind? There were perhaps Elysian Fields with their shades.

I left Paris on the 1st of January 1821: the Seine was frozen, and for the first time I travelled the roads with the comforts money could buy. Gradually I recovered my contempt for wealth; I began by feeling that it was a fine thing to ride in a comfortable carriage, to receive good service, not to have to bother with anything, to be preceded by a giant chasseur from Warsaw, always half-starved, who, in the absence of the Tsar, would have devoured Poland all by himself. But I quickly accustomed myself to my good fortune; I had a presentiment that it would not last long, and I would soon be back on my own two feet when it suited. By the time I arrived at my destination, nothing remained of my journey but my original inclination for the journey itself; an inclination for freedom – the satisfaction of having loosed my ties to society.

You will read, when I return from Prague in 1833, what I have to say of my old memories of the Rhine: I was obliged, because of the ice, to ascend its banks, and cross above Mainz. I barely concerned myself with *Maguntia*, its archbishop, its three or four sieges, and the *printing press* by mean of which however I held sway. Frankfurt, a Jewish city, only detained me for one of its business transactions: a currency conversion.

The journey was a melancholy one: the highroad was snow-covered and frost wreathed the branches of the pine trees. Jena appeared in the distance with the larvae of its twin battles. I passed through Erfurt and Weimar: the Emperor was no longer at Erfurt; Goethe, whom I so much admired, and whom I now admire a great deal less, lived in Weimar. The singer of *Matter* lived, and its ancient dust yet clung about his genius. I might have known Goethe, and I never met him; he leaves a gap in the procession of famous people who have passed before my eyes.

The tomb of Luther at Wittenberg did not detain me: Protestantism is not a religion but an illogical heresy; politically, an abortive revolution. Having eaten a little rye bread, while crossing the Elbe, that must have been kneaded in a cloud of tobacco smoke, I could have done with a drink from Luther's great glass, conserved as a relic. Passing through Potsdam and crossing the Spree, a river of ink on which barges, guarded by white dogs, ride, I arrived in Berlin. There, as I have said, lived the *false Julian* in his *false Athens*. I looked in vain for the sun of Mount Hymettus. I wrote Book IV of these *Memoirs* in Berlin: there you have seen my description of that city, my trip to Potsdam, my thoughts on Frederick the Great, his horse, his greyhounds, and Voltaire.



Staying at an inn for the night of the 11th of January, I then went off to reside on Unter den Linden, in a house vacated by Monsieur the Marquis de Bonnay, which belonged to Madame the Duchess de Dino; I was received by Messieurs de Caux, de Flavigny and de Cussy, secretaries to the legation.

On the 17th of January, I had the honor of presenting Monsieur le Marquis de Bonnay's letter of re-accreditation, and my letter of accreditation, to the King, who lodged in a simple house, its only distinction being two sentries at the door: anyone might enter; anyone might speak to him *if he was at home*. This simple style adopted by the German Princes contributed to rendering the names and prerogatives of the great less apparent to inferior mortals. Frederick-William went out each day, at the same hour, in an uncovered carriage which he drove himself, helmet on his head, a greyish cloak on his back, to smoke a cigar in the park. I often met him and we would continue our walks side by side. When he returned to Berlin, the sentry at the Brandenburg Gate announced him at the top of his voice; the guard presented arms and marched off; the King passed through, and all was done.

On the same day I paid court to the Royal Prince and his brothers, young and very light-hearted military men. I saw the Grand-Duke Nicholas and the Grand-Duchess, not long married, and still in the midst of celebrations. I also met the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, Prince William, the King's brother, and Prince Augustus of Prussia, long our prisoner: he had wanted to marry Madame Récamier; he owned the fine portrait of her that Gérard had painted and which he had exchanged with the prince for the picture of Corinna.

I was urged to seek out Monsieur Ancillon. We knew one another through our writings. I had met him in Paris with his pupil the Crown Prince; in the interim he had been charged with the Foreign Affairs portfolio in Berlin during Count von Bernstorff's absence. His life was very sad: his wife had lost her sight: all the doors of his house were left open; the poor blind lady roamed from room to room among her flowers, and perched here and there like a nightingale in a cage: she sang beautifully but soon died.

Monsieur Ancillon, like many of Prussia's illustrious men, was of French origin: a Protestant Minister, his opinions were at first extremely liberal; little by little they hardened. When I met him again in Rome in 1828, he had become a moderate Royalist once more, and reverted to monarchical absolutism. With a fierce delight in generous feeling, he had a fear and hatred of revolutionaries; it was that hatred that pushed him towards despotism, in order to seek shelter there. Do those who still celebrate 1793, and admire the crimes committed then, never comprehend how the horror with which those crimes gripped people presents an obstacle to the establishment of liberty?

There was a reception at court, and there commenced the honors shown me of which I was so little worthy. Jean-Bart wore a suit of cloth of gold lined with silvered cloth, on his visit to Versailles, which made him feel very uncomfortable. The Grand-Duchess, now the Empress of Russia, and the Duchess of Cumberland took my arm in a Polish march: my romance with society began. The air of that polonaise was a kind of *pot-pourri* composed of several little pieces among which, to my great satisfaction, I recognized the song about King Dagobert: it encouraged me, and came to the rescue of my timidity. These receptions were repeated; one of them in particular took place in the King's great palace. Not wishing to give an account of it myself, I reproduce here the one submitted to the Berlin Morgenblatt by the Baroness von Hohenhausen:

‘Berlin, the 22nd of March 1821.

Morgenblatt (*The Morning Paper*), no. 70.

*One of the notable people who attended this reception was the Vicomte de Chateaubriand, the French Ambassador, and, however splendid the spectacle unfolding before their eyes, Berlin's lovely ladies still spared a glance for the author of Atala, that fine and melancholy story in which the most ardent love succumbs in its struggle with religion. The death of Atala and Chactas' moment of happiness, during a storm in the ancient forests of America, painted in Milton's tones, remain forever engraved on the memories of all its readers. Monsieur de Chateaubriand wrote Atala in his youth, during which he was painfully afflicted by exile from his homeland: from that derives the profound melancholy and burning passion which fill the entire work. At present, this consummate Statesman has dedicated his pen wholly to politics. His most recent work, The Life and Death of the Duc de Berry, is written completely in the style of the panegyrists of Louis XIV.*

*Monsieur de Chateaubriand is of quite a modest and yet slender stature. His oval face bears an expression of piety and melancholy. He has dark hair and eyes: the latter shine with the light of his spirit which reveals itself in his features.'*

But I have white hair; moreover I am more than a century old, I am dead: so forgive Madame the Baroness von Hohenhausen for having sketched me in my prime, though she already grants me my years. The portrait is, moreover, very kind; but I owe it to truth to say that it is no good likeness.

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 2

#### Ministers and Ambassadors – History of the Court and society

The house *Under the Lindens*, Unter den Linden, was far too large for me, cold and dilapidated: I occupied only a small corner.

Among my colleagues, the Ministers and Ambassadors, the only remarkable person was Monsieur d'Alopeus. I have since met his wife and daughter again, in Rome, with the Grand-Duchess Helène: I would have been happier if the latter had been in Berlin instead of the Grand-Duchess Nicholas, her sister-in-law.

Monsieur d'Alopeus, my colleague, had the pleasant conviction of believing himself adored. He was persecuted by the passions which he inspired: *'By my faith,'* he said to me, *'I have no idea what power it is that I possess; but wherever I go women pursue me. Madame d'Alopeus is quite dedicated in her attachment to me.'* He had been a convinced Saint-Simonian. Private society, like public society, has its charms: in the former, there are relationships forever being forged and broken, family matters, deaths, births, particular joys and sorrows; all varying in character according to the age. In the latter, there are governments forever changing, battles lost or won, negotiations with the court, kings who pass by, and kingdoms that fall.

Under Frederick II, Elector of Brandenburg, nicknamed *Iron Tooth*; under Joachim II, who it was claimed was poisoned by Lippold of Prague; under John Sigismund, who brought his Electorate the Duchy of Prussia; under George William, the *Irresolute*, who, while losing his fortresses, left Gustavus-Adolphus conversing with the ladies of his court, and said: *'So what? We have cannon'*; under the Great-Elector, who throughout his States found only heaps of ash that kept the grass from growing, who gave an audience to the Ambassador from Tartary, whose interpreter had a wooden nose and cropped ears; under his son, the first King of Prussia, who, woken suddenly by his wife, took a fever from the fright and died of it; under all these rulers, various *memoirs* allow us simply to witness a repetition of similar events in private society.

Frederick-William I, the father of Frederick the Great, a strange and harsh individual, was raised by Madame de Rocoules, the refugee: he loved a young woman who could not improve him; he retreated to his smoking-room. He named Gundling, the buffoon, President of the Royal Academy in Berlin; he imprisoned his son in the citadel of Custrin, and Katte had his head removed in the presence of the young prince; that was the private life of that age. Frederick the Great, when he came to the throne, had an intrigue with an Italian dancer, La Barbarini, the only woman he ever showed an interest in: he was content to play the flute on his wedding night beneath the window of his bride Elizabeth of Brunswick. Frederick had a taste for music, and a mania for verse. The intrigues and epigrams of the two poets, Frederick and Voltaire, troubled Madame de Pompadour, the Abbé de Bernis, and Louis XV. The Margrave of Bayreuth was amorously involved in it all, as much as one can be with a poet. The literary circles around the King, the greyhounds on filthy armchairs; the concerts in front of statues of Antinous; the grand dinners; the bouts of philosophy; freedom of the press and strokes of the birch; then the lobster or eel pie which ended the life of a grand old man, who wanted to live: these are the matters that occupied the private lives of that age of letters and battles. – And, Frederick, nevertheless

remodeled Germany, created a counter-weight to Austria, and altered all the political interests and relationships within the country.

In the next reign we find the Marble Palace; Madame Rietz and her son, Alexander, the Graf von der Mark; 'Baroness' Stolzenberg, Mistress of the Margrave Schwed, a former actress; Prince Henry and his suspect friends; Mademoiselle Voss, Madame Rietz's rival; an intrigue at a masked ball between a young Frenchman and the wife of a Prussian general; and finally Madame de F..., whose adventures you can read of in the *Secret History of the Court of Berlin*; who recalls all those names? Who will remember ours? Now, in the Prussian capital, only a few octogenarians preserve the memory of that past generation.

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 3

William Humboldt – Adelbert de Chamisso

The habits of Berlin society suited me: between five and six one *went out for the evening*; all was over by nine, and I slept right through as if I were not an Ambassador. Sleep consumes existence: that is what is fine about it: *‘Time is long, and life is short’*, said Fénelon. William von Humboldt, brother of my illustrious friend Baron Alexander, was in Berlin: I knew him as a Minister in Rome; under suspicion, as far as government was concerned, because of his opinions, he led a retired life; to kill time he studied all the world’s languages and even dialects. He rediscovered peoples, ancient inhabitants of the earth, by means of the geographical denominatives of countries. One of his daughters spoke ancient and modern Greek equally well: if one came upon him on the right day, one could converse at dinner in Sanskrit.

Adelbert de Chamisso was housed in the Botanical Gardens, at some distance from Berlin. I visited him in that solitude where the plants were freezing in the greenhouses. He was tall, of a very handsome figure. I felt an attraction to this traveller, exiled like myself: he had seen those polar seas I had hoped to penetrate. An *émigré*, as I had been, he had been brought up in Berlin as a page. Adelbert, travelling through Switzerland, stopped for a moment at Coppet. He found himself one of a party on the lake, where he thought he would perish. He wrote that very day: *‘I see clearly that I must seek my salvation on the great waters.’*

Monsieur de Chamisso had been nominated by Monsieur de Fontanes as a professor at La Roche-sur-Yon, then as professor of Greek at Strasbourg; he refused the offer with these noble words: *‘The primary condition required, for work in instructing the young, is freedom: though I admire Bonaparte’s genius, it would not suit me.’* He refused likewise the benefits offered him under the Restoration: *‘I have done nothing for the Bourbons’*, he said, *‘and I cannot receive a reward for the blood and service of my forefathers. In this age every man must achieve things for himself.’* In Monsieur Chamisso’s family they preserve this note, written in the Temple, by Louis XVI himself: *‘I recommend Monsieur de Chamisso, one of my loyal servants, to my brothers.’* The royal martyr had hidden this note in his shirt so that it would be given to his senior page, Hippolyte Chamisso, Adelbert’s eldest brother.

Perhaps the most moving work of this child of *the Muses*, concealed beneath foreign arms and adopted by German bards, are these lines which he first penned in German and translated into French verse, about the Château de Boncourt, his paternal hearth:

*‘Weighed down by my white hair;  
I still dream of my early life;  
You pursue me, image so fair,  
Renewing beneath Time’s scythe.*

*From the depths of an emerald sea  
Rose that noble château of ours,  
I recall its roof high above me,  
With its crenellated towers;*

*Those lions on our coat of arms,  
Still show their kindly gaze,  
I smile at you, beloved guards;  
And hurl myself through the maze.*

*There's the sphinx of the fountain,  
There's the fig tree growing green;  
There, the vain shadow blossomed  
Of a child's first poetry.*

*I search for, and I see again  
My grandfather's chapel tomb;  
There his weapons hang in array.  
On their pillar, in the gloom.*

*That marble the sunlight gilds,  
Those sacred characters too,  
No, I cannot see them still,  
A veil of mist clouds my view.*

*My forebears' trusted domain  
Within me alone, you renew!  
Proud, nothing of you remains,  
the plough has passed over you!*

*Be fertile, my cherished land,  
I bless you, with heart at rest;  
Bless, as he may, the ploughman,  
Whose blade furrows your breast.'*

Chamisso blesses the farmer who ploughs the furrow of which he himself has been despoiled; his soul must have inhabited the regions where my friend Joubert soared. I regret Combours, and with less resignation, even though it may not have left my family. Embarking on a vessel provided by Count Romanzov, Monsieur de Chamisso with Captain Kotzebue discovered the straight to the east of the Behring Strait, and gave his name to one of the islands from which Cook glimpsed the coast of America. On Kamchatka, he discovered a portrait of Madame Récamier on porcelain, and his own little tale of Peter Schlemihl, translated into Dutch. Adelbert's hero, *Peter Schlemihl*, sold his soul to the devil: I would have preferred to sell him my body.

I remember Chamisso like the faint breeze which lightly swayed the stems of the bushes I passed through as I returned to Berlin.

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 4

#### Princess William – The Opera – A concert

Following a ruling of Frederick II, the Princes and Princesses of the bloodline in Berlin did not mix with the diplomatic corps; but, thanks to the carnival, to the marriage of the Duke of Cumberland with Princess Frederica of Prussia, sister of the late queen, thanks also to a certain relaxation of etiquette which, it was said, was allowed because of who I was, I had occasion to find myself among the royal family more often than my colleagues. As I visited *the great palace* from time to time, I encountered the Princess William: she was so kind as to conduct me through the apartments. I have never seen a sadder look than hers; in the inhabited rooms at the rear of the palace, overlooking the Spree, she showed me a chamber haunted at certain times by a lady in white, and, huddling against me in positive fright, she looked like that pale lady. For her part, the Duchess of Cumberland told me that she and her sister the Queen of Prussia, while they were both very young, had heard their mother who had just died speaking to them from behind her closed curtains.

The King, into whose presence I fell on emerging from my tour of the curiosities, led me to his oratory: he drew my attention to the crucifix and the paintings, and gave me the credit for these innovations because, as he told me, having read in *Le Génie du Christianisme* that the Protestants had stripped their religion bare, he had found my comment just: he had not yet attained his excesses of Lutheran fanaticism.

At the Opera in the evenings I had a box near the Royal Box, facing the stage. I chatted to the Princesses; the King went outside in the intervals; I met him in the corridor, he looked to see if there was anyone about and whether anyone could hear us; then he confessed to me in a low voice his hatred of Rossini and his love for Gluck. He elaborated his lament on artistic decadence and especially those gargled notes destructive of dramatic singing: he confided in me that he only dared say this to me, because of the people who surrounded him. Seeing someone coming, he hastened back to his box.

I saw Schiller's *Joan of Arc* performed: Rheims Cathedral was imitated perfectly. The King, serious in his beliefs, only tolerated representation of the Catholic religion, in the theatre, with pain. Monsieur Spontini, the author of *La Vestale*, was the director of the Opera-House. Madame Spontini, the daughter of Monsieur Énard, was very pleasant but she seemed to be atoning for female volubility by the slowness with which she spoke: each word was divided into separate syllables as it expired on her lips; if she had wished to say: *I love you*, a Frenchman's amorousness might well have vanished between the beginning and end of the three words. She could never complete my name, and failed to end it not without a certain grace.

A public concert took place two or three times a week. In the evening, on returning from work, young working-class girls, baskets under their arms, and young workmen carrying the tools of their trade, pushed pell-mell into a room; on entering they were given a music sheet, and they joined the mass choir with astonishing precision. It was somehow amazing that these two or three hundred voices blended together. When the piece was finished, each took their way home again. We are far from that sense of harmony, a powerful means of civilization; it has brought to the peasant cottages of Germany an education lacking to our farm workers: everywhere there is a piano there is an end to coarseness.

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 5

#### My first dispatches – Monsieur de Bonnay

Around the 13th of January, I began my series of dispatches to the Foreign Minister. My mind submits easily to this kind of task: why not? Were not Dante, Ariosto and Milton as successful in politics as in poetry? Doubtless I was no Dante, Ariosto, or Milton; Europe and France did see what I could achieve however in my Congress of Verona.

My predecessor in Berlin had dealt with me in 1816 as he had dealt with Monsieur Lameth, in a little poem at the beginning of the Revolution. When one is as amiable as that, it does not do to leave files behind or to show a clerk's correctness when one lacks the ability of a diplomat. It might happen, in the age in which we live, that a gust of wind blows someone you have spoken against into your role; and as the first duty of an ambassador is to study the embassy archives, that is where he will come across letters as they fell from the master's hand. What can one expect? Those profound minds, who labored for the success of the true cause, could not think of everything.

#### EXTRACTS FROM MONSIEUR DE BONNAY'S FILES:

No. 64

'22nd of November 1816.

*'The words the King addressed to the new Cabinet, formed from the Chamber of Peers, are known and approved of throughout Europe. I have been asked how it is possible that men devoted to the King, people attached to his person and occupying places in his household, or in those of our Princes, could indeed have cast their votes for Monsieur de Chateaubriand's entry to the secretariat. My response was that the ballot was a secret one, and that no one could know how individuals voted. "Ah!" exclaimed a notable person, "if the King could only be assured of that, I think access to the Tuileries would quickly be denied such disloyal servants." I thought I should say nothing, and I did so.'*

'15th of October 1816.

*'It will be the same with the measure of the 5th as with that of the 20th of September, Monsieur le Duc: in Europe both merely meet with approval. But what is astonishing, is to see the purest and worthiest of Royalists continuing in their passion for Monsieur de Chateaubriand, despite the publication of a pamphlet which claims in principle that the King of France, by virtue of the Charter, is simply a moral being, essentially null, and devoid of his own will. If anyone other than he had advanced a similar proposition, that man would, not without reason, have been considered a Jacobin.'*

See how surely I am put in my place. Moreover it is a good lesson; it teaches us to close our ears, in learning what will be thought of us later.

Reading the dispatches of Monsieur de Bonnay and those of other ambassadors of the old regime, it seemed to me that their dispatches dealt less with political matters than with anecdotes relating to people in society and at Court: they reduced themselves to being diaries of praise like Dangeau's or of satire like Talleyman's. Louis XVIII and Charles X too would have much preferred my colleagues' amusing letters to my serious correspondence. I could have laughed and mocked like my predecessors; but the age when



foreign affairs involved scandalous adventures and petty intrigues had passed. What benefit would a portrait of Monsieur Hardenberg have been to my country, an old man white as a swan, deaf as a post, going off to Rome without permission, amusing himself far too much, believing in all sorts of fantasies, delivered up finally to magnetism at the hands of Doctor Koreff, whom I met in remote places trotting his horse between the devil, medicine and the Muses?

This contempt for frivolous correspondence made me write to Monsieur Pasquier in my letter of 13th February 1821 no. 13:

*‘I have not spoken to you, Monsieur le Baron, as is usual, of receptions, balls, plays, etc.; I have sent you no little pen-portraits or vain satires; I have tried to rid diplomacy of gossip. The reign of the commonplace returns when extraordinary times have passed: now it is only necessary to depict what ought to be and to attack what threatens.’*

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 6

#### The Park – The Duchess of Cumberland

Berlin has left me with one lasting memory, because the nature of the recreations I found there recalled my childhood and youth; except that real princesses fulfilled the role of my *Sylph*. The aged crows, my eternal friends, came to perch on the lime trees in front of my window; I threw them food: with unimaginable dexterity, if they seized too large a piece of bread, they would drop it in order to seize a smaller piece; so that they could take another a little larger, and then another in succession till they seized an ultimate piece, which, being at the end of their beak, forced it to remain open, without any of the intervening layers of food falling. Their meal done, the birds sang after their fashion: *cantus cornicum ut saecula vetusta*; the sound of crows like the centuries past. I wandered through the empty wastes of a frozen Berlin; but I did not hear the lovely voices of young girls rise from its walls as they did from the ancient walls of Rome. Instead of Capuchins with white beards dragging their sandals through the flowers, I met soldiers rolling snowballs.

One day, on a round of the outer walls, Hyacinthe and I found ourselves faced by an east wind so piercing that we were obliged to run through the fields and regain the city half-dead. We crossed fenced ground, and all the guard dogs snapped at our heels and tore after us. The thermometer that day dropped to 22 degrees (Réamur) below freezing. A couple of the sentries at Potsdam were frozen.

On the far side of the park was an old abandoned pheasant covert – the Prussian Princes did not shoot. I crossed a little wooden bridge over a canal running into the Spree, and found myself among trunks of fir trees which formed a portico to the covert. A fox, reminding me of those in the avenue at Combours, emerged from a hole made in the wall of the reserve, came to ask my news then retreated into his copse.

What they call the park, in Berlin, is a wood of oak-trees, silver birch, beech, lime and Dutch poplars. It is situated at the Charlottenburg Gate and is crossed by the highroad which leads to that Royal residence. On the right of the park, is the Field of Mars; on the left, various little restaurants.

Within the park, which was not at that time pierced by regular alleyways, one discovered meadows, wild places and beech-wood benches on which German youth had formerly etched, with a knife, hearts pierced by daggers: beneath these pierced hearts one read the name Sand. Flocks of crows, living in trees approaching spring, began to call. Animal nature revived before vegetable nature: and the frogs, black all over, were consumed by ducks, in the waters which here and there were free of ice: the nightingales there, *announced springtime in the woods* of Berlin. However the park did not lack for attractive creatures; squirrels scampered among the branches or played on the ground, waving their tails like flags. When I approached the festivities, the actors fled up the trunks of the oak-trees, halting in a fork to grumble as they watched me pass beneath them. Few strollers frequented the plantation whose uneven ground was lined and cut by canals. Sometimes I encountered a gouty old officer who said to me, warmly in his delight, speaking of the pale ray of sunlight in which I shivered: *‘It’s breaking through!’* From time to time I met the Duke of Cumberland, on horseback and almost blind, halted by a Dutch poplar against which he had just banged his nose. One or two six-horse carriages passed: they carried the Ambassadors of Austria, or the Princess de Radzivil and her daughter, aged fifteen, delightful as one of those nudes with virgin faces which surround Ossian’s moon. The Duchess of Cumberland took the same direction

with me almost every day: now she would be off to a cottage to help a poor woman of Spandau, now she would stop to tell me graciously that she had hoped to meet me; a delightful daughter of royalty, descending from her car like the goddess of night to wander through the forests! I also saw her at home; she repeatedly told me that she wished to entrust her son to me, that little George who became the Prince whom his cousin Victoria, they say, would have wished at her side when she became Queen of England.

Princess Frederica, has since walked, in her days on the banks of the Thames, in those gardens at Kew which once witnessed my wanderings, between my two acolytes, *illusion* and *poverty*. After my departure from Berlin, she honored me with her correspondence; she depicted hour by hour the life of an inhabitant of those heaths where Voltaire walked, where Frederick died, where that Mirabeau hid who was to begin the Revolution of which I was a victim. The mind is captivated by perceiving the links which connect so many men who remain unknown to one another.

Here are a few extracts from the correspondence which commenced between me and the Duchess of Cumberland:

*‘19th of April, Thursday.*

*This morning, when I woke, I was brought the last witness of your memory of me; later I passed by your house, I saw the windows open as usual; all was in its place, except you! I cannot express to you how it afflicted me! I no longer know where to locate you; each instant you are more distant; the only fixed point is the 26th, the day when you expect to arrive, and the memory of you which I retain.*

*God willing you will find all changed for the better, for you and for the common good! Accustomed to sacrifice, I will even bear that of never seeing you again, if it is for your good and that of France.’*

*‘22nd.*

*Since Thursday, I have passed your house every day to go to church; I prayed deeply on your behalf. Your windows are constantly open, that affects me: who is it who has the thoughtfulness to follow your orders and tastes, despite your absence? It makes me think, sometimes, that you have not left; that business detains you, or that you wished to brush away bothersome things in order to finish things at your ease. Do not take that as a reproach: it’s the only way; but if that is the case, confide it to me.’*

*‘23rd.*

*Today the heat is so prodigious, even in church, that I could not take my walk at the usual time: it’s all the same to me at present. The dear little wood no longer charms me, everything bores me! This sudden alteration from cold to heat is common in the north; the inhabitants do not take after the climate in their control over their character and feelings.’*

*‘24th.*

*Nature is much more beautiful; all the leaves have emerged since your departure: I wish they could have arrived a few days earlier, so that you could have taken away a more radiant image of your stay here.’*

*‘Berlin, 12th of May 1821.*

*God be thanked, at last there is a letter from you! I know you could not write to me earlier; but, despite all the calculations my mind made, three weeks, or should I say rather twenty-three days, is a long time for friendship to endure, and to be without news resembles the saddest of exiles: yet memory and hope remained with me.'*

*'15th of May.*

*It is not from the stirrup, like the Grand Turk, but always from my bed that I write to you; but this retreat gives me the time to reflect on the new regime that you wish to insist on regarding Henri V. I am pleased with it; roast lion will only do him good; I merely advise you to start with the heart. You will have to feed lamb to your other pupil (George) so he does not play the devil too much. It is essential that this plan of education be realized and that Georges and Henri become good friends and allies.'*

Madame the Duchess of Cumberland continued to write to me of the waters at Ems, then the waters of Schwalbach, and after that Berlin, to which she returned on the 22nd of September 1821. She wrote from Ems: *'The coronation in England will take place without me; I am upset that the king has decided on the saddest day of my life for his crowning; that on which I saw my beloved sister (the Queen of Prussia) die. Bonaparte's death has also made me think of the suffering he caused her.'*

*'From Berlin, 22nd September.*

*I have already seen those great solitary alleys again. How indebted I shall be to you, if you send me as you promised the lines you have written on Charlottenburg! I have also made my way once more to the cottage in the wood where you had the goodness to help me in assisting the poor woman of Spandau; how good you are to remember her name! You recall happy times to me. It is nothing new to regret happiness.*

*At the moment when I was about to send this letter, I learnt that the King has been detained at sea by storms, and probably driven to the Irish coast; he had not arrived at London on the 14th; but you will know of his return before us.*

*Poor Princess William today received sad news of the death of her mother, the Dowager Landgraf of Hesse-Homburg. You see how I speak to you of all that concerns our family; Heaven send that you have better news to give me!'*

Does it not seem when the sister of the lovely Queen of Prussia speaks of *our family* as if she did me the kindness of speaking about my grandmother, my aunt and my obscure relatives at Plancoët? Did the French Royal family ever honor me with a smile compared with that of this foreign Royal family, who hardly knew me and owed me nothing? I suppress several other affectionate letters: they contain elements of suffering and contentment, resignation and nobility, the familiar and the elevated: they serve to counterbalance whatever I have said, perhaps too harshly, about the race of kings. A thousand years ago, and Princess Frederica as a daughter of Charlemagne would have carried Eginhard at night on her shoulders, so that he might leave no trace on the snow.

I have just re-read this chapter in 1840: I cannot prevent myself from being struck by the continuing romance of my life. So many paths missed! If I had returned to England with little George, the potential heir to the Crown, I should have seen any new dream of changing my country vanish, just as, if I had not

married, I would have remained from the very first in the land of Shakespeare and Milton. The young Duke of Cumberland, who has also lost his sight, did not marry his cousin the Queen of England. The Duchess of Cumberland has become the Queen of Hanover: where is she? Is she happy? Where am I? Where is my King? God willing, in a few years' time I shall no longer have to cast my eyes over my past life, nor ask myself those questions. But it is impossible for me not to pray Heaven to shed its favor on Princess Frederica's last years.

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 7

#### My dispatches, continued

I had only been sent to Berlin with an olive branch, and because my presence was a nuisance to the administration; but, knowing the inconstancy of fortune, and feeling that my political role was not complete, I kept an eye on events: I did not wish to desert my friends. I soon saw that the reconciliation between the Royalist party and the Ministerial party lacked sincerity; mistrust and prejudice remained; I was not dealt with as they had promised: they began to attack me. The entry to the Cabinet of Messieurs Villèle and Corbière excited the jealousy of the extreme right; it no longer marched beneath the banner of the former, and he, ambitiously impatient, became frustrated. We exchanged a few letters. Monsieur de Villèle regretted entering the Cabinet: he was wrong, and the proof that I had foreseen things correctly was that less than a year went by before he became Finance Minister and Monsieur de Corbière took the Interior Ministry.

I explained myself to Monsieur le Baron Pasquier also; on the 10th of February 1821 I wrote to him:

*'I learn from Paris, Monsieur le Baron, by the courier who arrived on the morning of the 9th of February, that it is claimed, wrongly, that I wrote from Mainz to the Prince de Hardenberg, or even that I sent a courier to him. I did not write to Monsieur de Hardenberg and even less did I send him a courier. I request, Monsieur le Baron, to be spared these machinations. If my services should prove no longer acceptable, it would give me no greater pleasure than to be told so quite openly. I neither solicited nor desired the mission with which I am charged; I have accepted an honorable exile neither from taste nor choice, but only for the good of harmony. If the Royalists have rallied to the Government, the Government knows that I have had the pleasure of contributing to that reconciliation. I would have some right to complain. What has been done for the Royalists since my departure? I have not ceased to write on their behalf: has anyone listened to me? Monsieur le Baron I have, by the grace of God, other things to do in life than to attend grand balls. My country requests my presence, my sick wife has need of my care, my friends ask for their guide. I am above or below the level of an Ambassador, and the same goes for Minister of State. You have no lack of men more skillful than I am in conducting diplomatic affairs; thus it would be useless to search for pretexts to quarrel with me. I can understand without having to have things spelt out; and you will find me ready to re-enter my previous obscurity.'*

All this was sincerely said; the ability to drive things home, and regret nothing, would have been of great use to me, if I had possessed some ambition.

#### MY DISPATCHES CONTINUED.

My diplomatic correspondence with Monsieur Pasquier took its course: continuing my pre-occupation with the affair at Naples, I wrote:

Nos. 15 and 16

'20th of February 1821

*‘Austria is rendering a service to all monarchies by destroying the edifice of Jacobinism in the Two Sicilies; but she will lose the support of those monarchies if the result of a salutary and necessary expedition is the conquest of a province or the oppression of a people. It is necessary to free Naples from demagogic independence and establish monarchical liberty; break their shackles, not bring them chains. But Austria does not want a constitution for Naples: what will she give them? Men? Where are they? It only needs a liberal priest and two hundred soldiers to begin it again.*

*After occupation, voluntary or forced, you should intervene to establish a constitutional government in Naples under which all social freedoms can be respected.’*

I had always retained in France a weight of opinion which obliged me to keep an eye on the interior. I dared to submit this plan to my Minister:

*‘To definitely adopt a Constitutional form of government.*

*To introduce a septennial renewal with no intention of retaining any of the actual Chamber; a move which would be suspected; nor of retaining it all which would prove dangerous.*

*To renounce extra-ordinary laws, which are the source of arbitrariness, and an endless subject of quarrels and calumnies.*

*To free the districts from Ministerial despotism.’*

In my dispatch of the 3rd of March, no. 18, I returned to the question of Spain; I wrote:

*‘It would be possible for Spain to speedily change its monarchy into a republic: its constitution ought to bear fruit. The King will flee, or be killed or deposed; he is not strong enough to take a grip on revolution. It is yet possible that Spain might remain for some time under popular rule, if it is organized into a federal republic, for the aggregation of which it is more suitable than any other country by reason of the diversity of its kingdoms, its manners, its laws and even its language.’*

The affair at Naples appears two or three times. I observed (6th of March, no. 19):

*‘That the Legitimacy has been unable to put down deep roots in a State which has so often changed ownership, and whose customs have been overthrown by so many revolutions. Affection has not had time to be born, habits to receive the uniform imprint of centuries and institutions. There are many corrupt or savage men among the Neapolitans who have no relationship with each other, and who are only weakly attached to the Crown: royalty is too close to beggary and too far from being Calabrese to be respected. To establish democratic freedom, the French had to show too much military ability; the Neapolitans will not show enough.’*

Finally, I said a few words again about Portugal and Spain.

The rumor had spread that John VI of Braganza had embarked at Rio de Janeiro for Lisbon. It was an irony of fate worthy of our age that a King of Portugal should go to seek shelter from a South American revolution beneath a European one, while passing the base of a rock which had held the conqueror who had forced him to take refuge in the New World.

*'The worst is to be feared regarding Spain,' I wrote (17th of March, no.21); 'the Peninsular revolution will run in cycles, unless someone lifts an arm capable of halting it; but where is that arm? That is forever the question.'*

That arm I had the honor of discovering in 1823; it was that of France.

I discover once more with pleasure, in this passage of my dispatch of the 10th of April, no. 26, my antipathetic jealousy against the allies and my preoccupation with the dignity of France; I said apropos of Piedmont:

*'I do not fear a prolongation of the troubles in Piedmont given their immediate outcome; but they may produce a deferred evil in motivating military intervention by Austria and Russia. The Russian army is continually on the move and has received no counter-orders.'*

*Consider if, in that case, it would not be better for the safety and dignity of France to occupy Savoy with twenty-five thousand men, while Russia and Austria are occupying Piedmont. I am convinced that such an action, vigorously conducted and politically strategic, flattering to French pride, would by that alone gain great popularity and bring infinite honor to the ministers concerned. Ten thousand Royal Guardsmen and a selection of the rest of our troops will easily create for you an army of twenty-five thousand excellent and loyal soldiers: the white cockade will be assured of success when it faces the enemy once more.*

*I feel, Monsieur le Baron, that we should avoid wounding French self-esteem and that the dominance of the Russians and Austrians in Italy ought to arouse our national pride; but we have an easy means of satisfying it, which is to occupy Savoy ourselves. The Royalists would be delighted and the liberals could only applaud if they saw us adopting an attitude worthy of our might. We would have at the same instant the pleasure of wiping out a demagogic revolution and the honor of re-establishing the superiority of our arms. It would be to greatly misunderstand the French spirit if we feared to assemble twenty-five thousand men to march into a foreign country, and rank ourselves alongside the Russians and Austrians as a military power. I would answer for the outcome with my head. We may have stayed neutral in the Naples affair: can we do so in safety and with glory where the disturbances in Piedmont are concerned?'*

Here all my method is revealed: I was a Frenchman; I had my settled political views well before the Spanish War, and I glimpsed how the responsibility of success, if I obtained it, might weigh on my head.

All I recall here is doubtless of interest to no one; but such is the inconvenience of *Memoirs*: when there are no historical facts to record, they only tell you about the author, and stupefy you. Leave these forgotten shades alone! I prefer to recall that Mirabeau, as yet unknown, fulfilled a secret mission in Berlin in 1786, and was obliged to train a pigeon to send news to the King of France of the Mighty Frederick's last sighs.

*'I was in some perplexity,' Mirabeau writes, 'I was certain that the gates of the city were closed; it was even possible that the bridges from the island of Potsdam had been raised as soon as the event occurred, and in that case things might remain in a state of uncertainty for as long as the new King wished. Given the first supposition, how could a courier leave? There was no way of scaling the ramparts or the palisades, without exposing oneself to a challenge; the sentries forming a chain every forty paces behind*



*the palisade, and every sixty paces behind the walls, what to do? Had I been the Ambassador, the certainty that the symptoms were mortal would have encouraged me to send a dispatch before he died, since what more can the word dead deliver? In my position what ought I to do? Whatever it might be, the most important thing was to be of service...I had good reason to be wary of the activities of our embassy. What should I do? I sent a reliable man on a lively and vigorous mount four miles out of Berlin, to a farm, from whose pigeon-loft I had acquired some days ago two pairs of pigeons, whose ability to return had been proven, so that unless the bridges of the island of Potsdam had not been raised, I was sure of my actions.*

*...I decided then that we were not rich enough to throw a hundred louis out of the window; I renounced all my fine preparations that had cost me an amount of thought, activity, and louis, and I released my pigeons with the word home. Did I do right? Did I do wrong? I do not know; but I had no express orders, and people are sometimes less than grateful when one does more than one's duty.'*

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 8

A memoir I started: on Germany

During their sojourn in foreign parts, ambassadors were encouraged to write a *memoir* on the state of the nations and governments to which they were accredited. This spate of memoirs may prove useful historically. Nowadays the same injunction is made, but hardly any diplomatic agents submit one. I have been too brief a resident in my embassies to finish any lengthy studies; nevertheless, I have outlined some; my patient work has not been totally sterile. I found this sketch of my research on Germany which I began there:

*‘After the fall of Napoleon, the introduction of representative government to the German Confederacy re-awoke in Germany those first innovative ideas that the Revolution had originally given birth to there. They fermented there often violently: youth was summoned to the country’s defence by the promise of liberty; that promise was avidly received by the students who discovered in their teachers the tendency to support liberal theory that science has possessed in this century. Under German skies, that love of liberty became a kind of fanaticism, sombre and mysterious, propagating itself by means of secret societies. Sand frightened Europe. That man, however, who revealed a powerful sect, was only a vulgar enthusiast; he erred, and mistook the commonplace spirit for a transcendental one: his crime will be forgotten as that of a scribbler whose genius could not rise to empire, and who had too little of the king and conqueror to be worthy of a dagger blow.*

*A kind of political tribunal of inquisition, and the suppression of freedom of the Press, has arrested that movement of minds; but one should not believe it has broken the spring of action. Germany now, like Italy, desires political unity, and with that idea, which stays dormant for a shorter or longer period of time depending on men and events, they will always be able, in waking it, to stir the Germanic peoples. The Princes or Ministers who may appear in the ranks of the Confederation of German States will hasten or retard the revolution in that country, but they will not stop the human race from developing: each century takes its own course. Today there is no one of note in Germany, nor even in Europe: we have passed from giants to dwarfs, and fallen from immensity into the narrow and limited. Bavaria, because of the government created by Monsieur de Montgelas, still promotes new ideas, though it went backwards as long as the Landgraviat of Hesse-Kassel refused to admit there had been a European Revolution. The Prince, who has just died, wished his soldiers, formerly soldiers of Jérôme Bonaparte, to wear powder and queues; he mistook the old fashions for the old ways, forgetting that one can copy the former, but can never bring back the latter.’*

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 9

#### Charlottenburg

In Berlin, and in the North generally, monuments are fortresses; their aspect alone grips the heart. When one finds these buildings on fertile inhabited terrain, they give birth to the idea of legitimate defence; women and children sitting and playing some way from these sentinels, contrast pleasantly enough with them; but a fortress on heath-land, in a waste, only brings to mind human wrath: against whom are they raised these ramparts, if not against poverty and freedom? You need to be me, to find any pleasure in roaming around at the foot of those bastions, listening to the gusts of wind in the ditches, in sight of those parapets raised in expectation of enemies who might never appear. Those military labyrinths, those silent guns facing each other at the angles of grassy salients, those sentries of stone where one sees no one and from which no eye looks out at you, are of an unbelievable gloominess. If, in the twin solitude of nature and war, you find a daisy sheltering beneath the slope of a field-work, that gift of Flora refreshes you. When, in Italian castellos, I glimpsed she-goats clinging to the ruins, and the goat-girl sitting under a pine tree for a parasol; when, on the medieval walls that encircle Jerusalem, my gaze plunged into the valley of the Cedron and fell on Arab women clambering up the escarpments among the stones; the spectacle was sad no doubt, but history was there and the silence of the present merely allowed me to hear the noise of the past more clearly.

I asked for leave on the occasion of the baptism of the Duc de Bordeaux. The request having been granted, I prepared to depart: Voltaire, in a letter to his niece, said that he was watching the Spree flow, that the Spree ran into the Elbe, the Elbe into the sea, and the sea received the Seine; thus he was heading towards Paris. Before leaving Berlin, I made a last visit to Charlottenburg: it was not Windsor, Aranjuez, Caserta, or Fontainebleau: the villa, attached to a hamlet, is surrounded by an English park of small extent from which one can see the fallows beyond. The Queen of Prussia enjoyed a peace here which the memory of Bonaparte could no longer disturb. What a row that exterminator once made in that sanctuary of silence, when he appeared there with his fanfares and his legions blood-stained from Jena! It was from Berlin, having wiped Frederick the Great's kingdom from the map, that he denounced the Continental blockade and planned the Moscow Campaign in his mind; his words had already brought death to the heart of an accomplished Princess: she sleeps now at Charlottenburg, beneath a mausoleum; a tomb with her fine statue in marble, represents her. I made these verses about the tomb at the request of the Duchess of Cumberland:

#### THE TRAVELLER

*Under the tall pines who guards these springs,  
Say, keeper, this new monument's for whom?*

#### THE KEEPER

*One day 'twill mark for you the end of things:  
Oh traveller, it is a tomb!*

#### THE TRAVELLER

*Who lies here?*

*THE KEEPER*

*A thing once full of charm.*

*THE TRAVELLER*

*That someone loved?*

*THE KEEPER*

*Who was adored.*

*THE TRAVELLER*

*Open then.*

*THE KEEPER*

*Enter not, if you fear the harm  
Tears bring.*

*THE TRAVELLER*

*I have often wept before.  
From Greece or Italy  
They stole this marble for a sepulchre;  
What tomb released it to enchant us here?  
Cornelia's perhaps or Antigone's?*

*THE KEEPER*

*The beauty whose image stirs your words  
spent her whole life among these trees.*

*THE TRAVELLER*

*Who then amidst these marble-clad walls  
hung those faded crowns for her, in a row?*

*THE KEEPER*

*The beautiful children who with all  
her virtues were crowned here below.*

*THE TRAVELLER*

*Someone comes.*

*THE KEEPER*

*A husband: this way he'll often go,  
Nurturing his sad private memories.*

*THE TRAVELLER*

*He lost all then?*

*THE KEEPER*

*No: his throne he keeps.*

*THE TRAVELLER*

*A throne cannot console.*

## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 10

The interval between my Berlin and London Embassies – The baptism of Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux –  
A letter to Monsieur Pasquier – A letter from Monsieur de Bernstorff – A letter from Monsieur Ancillon –  
A last letter from Madame the Duchess of Cumberland

Paris, 1839

I arrived in Paris at the moment of celebration for the baptism of Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux. The cradle of that scion of Louis XIV, which I had the honor of paying carriage for, has vanished like that of the King of Rome, though the latter cradle was attached to a spear-head in order to be hurled to the other side of the river where we shall all land. In another age than ours, Louvel's terrible deed would have guaranteed Henri V the scepter; but crime no longer confers rights except on the man who commits it.

After the baptism of Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux, I was at last reinstated as a Minister of State: Monsieur de Richelieu had taken away, Monsieur de Richelieu now gave; the reparation was no more agreeable to me than the wrong wounded me.

While I was flattering myself that I would be off to see my crows again, the deck was shuffled: Monsieur de Villèle stood down. Out of loyalty to my friends and my political principles, I thought it necessary to resign with him. I wrote to Monsieur Pasquier:

*'Paris, 30th of July 1821.*

*Monsieur le Baron,*

*When you had the kindness to invite me to your residence on the 14th of this month it was to tell me that my presence in Berlin was essential. I had the honor to reply that it appeared as if Messieurs de Corbière and Villèle would resign from the government, and that my duty was to follow them. In practicing representative government it is the custom for men of the same opinion to share the same fate. Whatever the custom, Monsieur le Baron, honor demands it, since it is not a question of favor but one of disgrace. Consequently, I am repeating in writing the offer I made to you verbally of my resignation as plenipotentiary minister to the Court of Berlin; I hope Monsieur le Baron that you will be kind enough to inform the King. I beg His Majesty to credit my motives, and to accept my profound and respectful gratitude for the recognition he has deigned to honor me with.*

*I have the honor to be, etc.*

*CHATEAUBRIAND.'*

I announced the event which would sever our diplomatic relationship to Monsieur the Count von Bernstorff; he replied as follows:

*'Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*'Though I may have anticipated the news you have been kind enough to inform me of, for some time, I am no less painfully affected by it. I understand and respect the motives which, in this delicate*

*matter, have determined your decision; but in adding new titles to those which have earned you universal esteem in this country, it also augments the regrets felt here in the certainty of a loss long-feared and forever irreparable. These sentiments are strongly shared by the King and the royal family, and I wait only for the moment of your recall to say it to you in an official capacity.*

*Preserve your memory and goodwill towards me, I beg you, and accept this new expression of my inviolable devotion and the high regard with which I have the honor to be, etc., etc.*

*BERNSTORFF.*

*Berlin, the 25th of August 1821.'*

I was urged to express my friendship and regrets to Monsieur Ancillon: his very fine reply (the praise for me apart) merits its inclusion here:

*'Berlin, the 22nd of September 1821.*

*You are then, my dear Sir and illustrious friend, irrevocably lost to us? I foresaw this misfortune, and yet it has affected me, as much as if it had been unexpected. We deserved to possess and retain you, because we have at least the feeble merit of fully feeling, knowing and admiring your superiority. To tell you that the King, the Princes, the Court and the city regret your absence is to praise them more than yourself; to tell you that I rejoice in those regrets, that I am proud of my country as a result, and that I share strongly in them, would fall far short of the truth, and give you a very poor notion of what I feel. Allow me to believe that you know me well enough to read my heart. If that heart accuses you, my mind not only absolves you but renders homage to your noble action and the principles which dictated it. You will provide a great lesson and be a fine example to France; you have given both, by refusing to serve a government which does not know how to evaluate the situation, or has not the necessary strength of mind to resolve it. In a representative monarchy, the ministers and those who they employ in senior positions ought to form a homogenous whole, all parts of which should show solidarity with one another. There, less than anywhere else, should one separate from one's friends; one supports them and rises with them, equally one descends and falls with them. You have shown France the truth of this maxim, in resigning with Messieurs de Villèle and Corbière. At the same time, you have also taught her that fortune is not a consideration when it is a matter of principles; and, indeed, if yours had not reason, conscience and the experience of all times, on their side, it would only take the sacrifices they dictate to such a person as yourself to establish a powerful presumption in their favor, in the eyes of all those who understand nobility.*

*I await with impatience the result of the next election to draw France's horoscope. They will decide her future.*

*Farewell, my illustrious friend; let drops of dew fall sometimes from the heights you inhabit onto a heart which will not cease to admire you and love you until it ceases to beat.*

*ANCILLON.*

Attentive to the good of France, and no longer concerned with myself or my friends, I sent the following note at a later date to Monsieur:

NOTE.

*‘If the King does me the honor of consulting me, here is what I would propose for the good of the service and the peace of France:*

*The center-left of the elected Chamber was satisfied with the nomination of Monsieur Royer-Collard; yet I believe peace would be more assured if someone of merit was introduced into the Council of that opinion and selected from among the members of the Chamber of Peers or the Chamber of Deputies.*

*To appoint to the Council an independent deputy of the right;*

*To complete the distribution of appointments in that spirit.*

*As for other things:*

*To present complete legislation at the appropriate time covering the freedom of the Press, in which ‘proceedings based on tendency’ and ‘discretionary censure’ would be abolished; to prepare a definition of common law; to complete the legislation on septennial renewal, taking the age of eligibility to thirty years; in a word going forward Charter in hand, to defend religion, courageously, against impiety, but at the same time protecting it from fanaticism and the imprudence of a zeal which does it great harm.*

*As for external affairs, three things should guide the King’s Ministers: honor, freedom and the interests of France,*

*France is now wholly Royalist; she can become wholly revolutionary: let us attend to institutions and I will answer with my head for a few coming centuries; violate or distort those institutions, and I would not answer for a few months.*

*I and my friends are ready to support with all our strength an administration built on the foundations indicated above.*

CHATEAUBRIAND.’

A voice, in which the woman overcame the princess, arrived to give consolation to what would have been the mere unpleasantness of a life forever changing. Madame the Duchess of Cumberland’s handwriting was so altered that I had difficulty in recognizing it. The letter bore the date 28th of September 1821: it was the last that I received from the royal hand. (Princess Frederica, Queen of Hanover, succumbed after a long illness. Note: Paris, July 1841) Alas, the noble friends who sustained me in Paris in those days have left this world! Am I to remain here so obstinately, that no one to whom I am attached shall survive me? Happy are those on whom age has the same effect as wine, who lose their memory when they are full of years!



## BOOK XXVI

### CHAPTER 11

Monsieur de Villèle, Finance Minister— I am appointed Ambassador to London

The resignations of Messieurs de Villèle and de Corbière did not long delay the dissolution of the Cabinet and the re-entry of my friends to the Council, as I had foreseen; Monsieur le Vicomte de Montmorency was appointed as Foreign Minister, Monsieur de Villèle as Finance Minister, and Monsieur de Corbière as Minister of the Interior. I had played too great a part in recent political events and I exercised too great an influence on opinion to be passed over. It was decided that Monsieur le Duc Decazes be replaced as Ambassador in London: Louis XVIII was always happy to send me away. I went to thank him; he talked to me of his favorite with a constancy of attachment rare in a king; he *begged* me to erase from George IV's mind the prejudices that he had conceived against Monsieur Decazes, and to forget myself the divisions which had existed between me and the former Minister of Police. This monarch, from whom so many misfortunes had failed to draw a tear, was moved by the suffering with which the man he had honored with his friendship may have been afflicted.

My appointment brought back memories: Charlotte entered my thoughts again; my youth, my emigration, appeared to me all with their joy and pain. Human weakness also gave me pleasure at the thought of reappearing, powerful and recognized, where I had been unknown and powerless. Madame de Chateaubriand, fearing the sea, did not dare to cross the Channel, and I departed alone. The secretaries to the embassy had gone on ahead.

**End of Book XXVI**

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 1

The year 1822 – First dispatches from London

Revised: December 1846.

It was in London, in 1822, that I wrote the longest successive instalment of my *Memoirs*, containing my voyage to America, my return to France, my marriage, my crossing to Paris, my emigration to Germany with my brother, and my residence and misfortunes in England from 1793 to 1800. There will be found my description of England as it was; and when I revisited it all during my embassy in 1822, the changes which had taken place in the manners and people since 1793, at the century's end, struck me forcibly; I was naturally drawn to compare what I saw in 1822, with what I had seen during my seven year exile across the Channel.

Thus the things which I would have set down here, under the appropriate dates covering my diplomatic mission, have already been anticipated. The prologue to Book VI told you of my emotion, the feelings recalled by the sight of those places dear to my memory; but perhaps you have not read that book? You have done well. It is enough now that I have told you of the place where the gaps which must exist in this present recital of my London embassy have been filled. Behold me then, writing in 1839, among the dead of 1822, and the dead who preceded them in 1793.

In London, in the month of April 1822, I was a hundred and fifty miles from Madame Sutton. I walked in Kensington Park, bearing my recent impressions, and the distant past of my youth: confusions in time which produced in me confusions of memory; life which consumes itself mingles, like the burning of Corinth, the molten bronze of the statues of *the Muses* and of *Love*, the tripods and the tombs.

The parliamentary vacation was in progress when I reached my residence on Portland Place. The Under-Secretary of State, Monsieur Planta, invited me, on behalf of the Marquis of Londonderry, to dinner at North Cray, the noble lord's estate. That *villa*, with a large tree before the windows on the garden side, overlooked the meadows; woody undergrowth on the hills distinguished this site from the ordinary English view. Lady Londonderry was very fashionable in her role as a Marchioness and the wife of the Prime Minister.

My dispatch of the 12th of April, no.4, details my first meeting with Lord Londonderry; it touched on matters which were to concern me.

*'London, 12th of April 1822.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I went, the day before yesterday, Wednesday the 10th, to North Cray. I have the honor to send you an account of my conversation with the Marquis of Londonderry. It lasted an hour and a half, before dinner, and we resumed later, but less informally, since we were not alone.*

*Lord Londonderry first asked for news of the King's health, with an insistence which visibly declared a political interest; reassured by me on that point, he passed to the government: "It is strengthened," he said to me. I replied; "It was never weakened, and as it adheres to party, it will remain*

in control as long as that party dominates the two Chambers.” *That led us to discuss the elections: he seemed struck by what I said regarding the advantage of a summer session in order to restore order to the financial year; he had not fully understood till then the state of the matter.*

*The war between Russia and Turkey then became the subject of our conversation. Lord Londonderry, in speaking to me of soldiers and arms, appeared to me to hold the opinion of our previous government regarding the danger to us represented by massing our troops; I rejected that idea, and maintained that there was nothing to fear by our sending French soldiers into combat; that none would be disloyal faced with the enemy flag; that our army had just been strengthened; that it would be tripled tomorrow, if that were necessary, without the least trouble; that indeed some junior officers might shout “Long Live the Charter!” in their garrisons, but that our grenadiers always shouted “Long Live the King!” on the battlefield.*

*I do not know if high politics has made Lord Londonderry forget about the slave trade; he said not a word to me about it. Changing the subject, he spoke to me of a message from the President of the United States committing Congress to recognize the independence of the Spanish Colonies. “Commercial interests,” I said, “may draw some benefit from it, but I doubt that political interests will find the same profit in it: there are enough Republican ideas in the world already. To add to the weight of those ideas, is to compromise further the fate of the European monarchies.” Lord Londonderry concurred with me, and said these notable words: “As for us (the English), we are not disposed to recognize revolutionary governments.” Was he being sincere?*

*It was necessary, Monsieur le Vicomte, to relate so important a conversation to you verbatim. However, we should not mislead ourselves: the English will sooner or later recognize the independence of the Spanish Colonies; public opinion and foreign trade will require it. They have already gone to considerable expense, in the last three years, establishing secret relations with the insurgent provinces north and south of the Isthmus of Panama.*

*In summary, Monsieur le Vicomte, I found the Marquis of Londonderry a man of intellect, of doubtful frankness perhaps; a man still imbued with the old system of government; a man accustomed to diplomatic subservience and surprised, without being offended, by a nobler mode of speech from France; a man finally who cannot avoid a kind of astonishment in speaking to one of those Royalists who, for the last seven years, have been represented to him as fools or madmen.*

*I have the honor, etc.’*

With these general matters were mixed, as in all embassies, specific transactions. I had to attend to a request from the Duke of Fitzjames, regarding the proceedings of the boat *Eliza-Ann*, the depredations of Jersey fishermen among the Granville oyster-beds, etc. etc. I regretted being obliged to dedicate a small compartment of my brain to claimants’ dossiers. Though one rummages one’s memory, it is hard to recall Messieurs Usquin, Coppinger, Deliège and Piffre. But, in a few years’ time, will we be any more well-known than these gentlemen? A certain Monsieur Bonnet having died in America, all the Bonnets in France wrote to me to claim the succession; those tormenters write to me yet! They might have left me in peace, by now. I have replied politely to them that the small accident of the fall of the throne having occurred, I am no longer concerned with all that: they stick tight, and wish to inherit at all costs.

As for the East, it was a matter of recalling the various ambassadors from Constantinople. I foresaw that the English would not follow the actions of the Continental Alliance: I told Monsieur de Montmorency so. The rupture that had been feared between Russia and the Porte did not occur: Alexander's moderation delayed the event. I expended in this regard a vast amount of *to-ing* and *fro-ing*, sagacity and reason; I wrote many dispatches, which are moldering in our archives, giving an account of events that did not happen. I had at least the advantage over my colleagues of placing no importance on my efforts; I saw them, unconcernedly, swallowed in oblivion with all the lost thoughts of men.

Parliament began its session once more on the 17th of April; the King returned on the 18th, and I was presented to him on the 19th. I gave an account of this presentation in my dispatch of the 19th; it ended thus:

*'His Majesty, with his rich and varied conversation, did not leave me room to say anything of those matters with which our King has specially entrusted me; but the imminent and favorable opportunity of a fresh audience presents itself.'*

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 2

A conversation with George IV regarding Monsieur Decazes – The nobility of our diplomacy under the Legitimacy – The Parliamentary Session

The thing which the King had particularly charged me to raise with George IV concerned Monsieur le Duc Decazes. I fulfilled the obligation a little later: I told George IV that Louis XVIII was troubled by the coolness with which the Ambassador of His Very Christian Majesty had been received. George IV replied:

*‘Listen, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, and I will make you a confession: Monsieur Decaze’s appointment did not please me; I was presented with it somewhat cavalierly. My friendship for the King of France alone made me tolerate a favorite who had no other merit than that of his attachment to his master. Louis XVIII has often relied on my goodwill, with good reason; but I could not permit the indulgence of treating Monsieur Decazes with a distinction which would have harmed England. However, tell your King that I am concerned by what he has charged you with telling me, and that I will always be happy to show him my true attachment.’*

Emboldened by these words, I made George IV aware of all that came to mind in favor of Monsieur Decazes. He replied, partly in French, partly in English: ‘*À merveille! You are a true gentleman.*’ On my return to Paris, I recounted this conversation to Louis XVIII: he seemed grateful to me. George IV had spoken like a noble prince but also like an independent spirit; he was without bitterness because he was thinking of other things. It did not do however to gamble with him except in moderation. One of his gaming friends had bet that he would ask George IV to pull the bell-cord and that George IV would obey. Indeed, George IV did pull the cord and said to the *gentleman* of his establishment: ‘*Show Monsieur the door.*’

The idea of returning our armies to power and splendor possessed me continually. I wrote to Monsieur de Montmorency, on the 13th of April: ‘*An idea has come to me, Monsieur the Vicomte, which I submit to your judgement: would you find me at fault if in conversation with Prince Esterhazy, I were to tell him that if Austria should need to withdraw a section of its troops from Piedmont, we might replace them? Rumors which spread of an intended mobilization of our troops in the Dauphiné offered me a favorable pretext. I had proposed to the former minister to send a garrison to Savoy, during the revolt of June 1821 (see one of my dispatches from Berlin). He rejected the measure, and I think that in doing so he made a capital error. I persist in believing that the presence of French troops in Italy would have produced a fine effect on public opinion, and that the King’s government would have gained much glory from it.*’

Proofs abound of the nobility of our diplomacy during the Restoration. What did it matter to anyone? Did I not read only this morning, in a left-wing newspaper, that the *Alliance* had forced us to be its policemen and to make war in Spain, when the records of the Congress of Verona exist, when the diplomatic documents show in an irrefutable manner that all Europe, with the exception of Russia, did not want war; that not only did she not want it, but that England openly rejected it, and Austria thwarted us in secret by less noble measures? That will not prevent some new lie tomorrow; no one will give themselves the trouble of investigating the matter, of reading that which they speak of *knowingly* without having read! Every lie repeated becomes a truth: one cannot have too much contempt for human opinion.

Lord John Russell put forward, on the 25th of April, in the Commons, a motion regarding the state of national representation in parliament: Mr. Canning opposed it. The latter in turn proposed a bill to repeal part of the act which deprived Catholic Peers of the right to vote and sit in the Lords. I was present at the sessions in the Lords, on the Woolsack, where the Lord Chancellor made me sit. Mr. Canning was present in 1822 at the session of the Chamber of Peers which finally rejected his bill; he was offended by a phrase of the aged Lord Chancellor; the latter, speaking of the author of the bill, exclaimed disdainfully: '*We are assured that he is leaving for India: ah! Let him go, this fine gentleman, let him go! Farewell!*' Mr. Canning said to me on emerging: '*I will see him again.*'

Lord Holland spoke very well, without however recalling Mr. Fox. He twisted himself about, so that he often presented his back to the assembly and addressed his sentences to the wall. They shouted: '*Hear! Hear!*' No one was shocked by his eccentricity.

In England everyone expresses themselves as they wish; formal advocacy is unknown; nothing is consistent in the voices or declamation of the orators. They are listened to patiently; no one is shocked if the speaker lacks ability; let him stammer, let him drone on, let him struggle to find the words, he has nevertheless made *a fine speech* if he has said something sensible. This variability of men, left as nature made them, ends by being agreeable; it breaks the monotony. It is true that only a small number of Lords and Members of the Commons got to their feet. We, always on stage, we hold forth and gesticulate, we serious puppets. It was a useful lesson for me that passage from the silent and secretive monarchy of Berlin to the noisy public monarchy of London: one might receive some instruction by comparing two nations at either end of the scale.

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 3

#### English Society

The arrival of the King, the return of Parliament, the opening of the festive season, mingled duty, business and pleasure; one might meet the Ministers at Court, at a ball, or in Parliament. To celebrate the official anniversary of His Majesty's birth, I dined with Lord Londonderry, I dined on the Lord Mayor's barge, which sailed as far as Richmond: I prefer the miniature Bucentaur in the Venice Arsenal, bearing only a memory of the Doges and a Virgilian name. Formerly as an *émigré*, lean and half-naked, I amused myself, though no Scipio, with throwing stones into the water, along that shoreline grazed by the Lord Mayor's broad and well-lined barge.

I also dined in the East End with Monsieur Rothschild of London, younger brother of Salomon: where did I not dine? The roast-beef had as imposing a presence as the Tower of London; the fish were so large one could not see as far as their tails; ladies, whom I only saw there, sang like Abigail. I drank Tokay, not far from the places where I drank water straight from the jug while almost dying of hunger; reclining in the depths of my comfortable carriage, on the silk-covered padding, I gazed at Westminster Abbey in which I had spent the night imprisoned, and around which I would walk, all muddy, with Hingant and Fontanes. My residence, which cost me 30,000 francs to rent, may be compared with the attic I lived in with my cousin La Bouëtardais, when, in a red robe, he played the guitar on an uncomfortable camp bed, which I had made space for next to my own.

There was no longer any question of those *émigré hops* where we danced to the sound of a violin played by a Councillor of the Breton Parliament; it was Almack's, with Colinet as conductor, that provided my pleasures; a public ball-room under the patronage of the great ladies of the West End. There the old and young dandies met. Among the old the conqueror of Waterloo shone, who paraded his glory to set a trap for the ladies during the quadrilles; at the head of the younger ones Lord Clanwilliam was prominent, the son, it was said, of the Duc de Richelieu. He did wonderful things: he rode his horse to Richmond, and returned to Almack's, having fallen off twice. He had a certain trick of speaking in the manner of Alcibiades, which delighted. Fashions in words, affectations of language and pronunciation, changed in London high society with almost every Parliamentary session: a straightforward man is quite dumbfounded at not understanding English, when he understood it perfectly six months previously. In 1822, the fashionable were obliged to present themselves, at first sight, as ill and unhappy; they had to possess something negligent about the person, long nails, a partial beard, not shaved, but allowed to grow a little, neglectfully, during their preoccupation with despair; locks of straggling hair; a profound gaze, sublime, errant and fatal; lips curled in contempt of the human species; the heart wearied, Byronic, filled with the disgust and mystery of existence.

Today that is all past: the *dandy* must possess a conquering, careless, insolent air; he must though care for his appearance, cultivate a moustache, or a beard trimmed as round as a ruff in the age of Elizabeth I, or like a radiant sun disc; he reveals his proud independence of character by keeping his hat on his head, lounging on a sofa, stretching his booted legs out under the noses of the admiring ladies seated on chairs around him; he rides with a crop which he holds upright like a candlestick, indifferent to the horse which chances to be between his legs. His health needs to be perfect, and his soul filled with half a dozen joys or so. Some radical dandies, the most advanced, sport a pipe.

But doubtless, all this has changed at the very moment I set out to describe it. They say the dandy of today must not be aware of whether he exists or no, whether society is there, whether it contains ladies, and whether he should greet his fellow man. Is it not strange to find the original of the dandy in the reign of Henri III: *'Those pretty darlings,'* says the author of *The Isle of Hermaphrodites*, *'wear their hair long, curled and re-curved, rising above their little velvet bonnets, like women, and the ruffs of their linen shirts of starched finery, and half a foot long, such that seeing their heads above their ruffs, they look like St John the Baptist, with his head on a platter.'*

They go to present themselves at Henry III's apartments, *'swinging their body, head and limbs, so one would think they would fall headlong at the slightest obstacle...They find this manner of walking finer than any other.'*

The English are all mad by nature or by fashion.

Lord Clanwilliam soon passed by: I met him again at Verona; he became an Ambassador in Berlin after me. We followed the same path for an instant, though we did not walk at the same pace.

Nothing succeeded, in London, like insolence, witness Comte d'Orsay, the brother of the Duchesse de Guiche: he galloped in Hyde Park, leapt the fences, gamed, rubbed shoulders informally with the dandies: he had a success without equal, and, to complete it all, ended by conquering a whole family, father, mother and children.

The ladies most in fashion pleased me least; one of them however, Lady Gwydir, was delightful; she was like a Frenchwoman in her style and manners. Lady Jersey still preserved her beauty. I met the Opposition at her house. Lady Conyngham belonged to that Opposition, and the King himself kept a secret fondness for his former friends. Among the noted patronesses of Almack's was the Ambadress of Russia.

She, the Countess von Lieven, had various quite ridiculous affairs involving Madame d'Osmond and George IV. As she was daring and was regarded as being in favor, she had become extremely fashionable. She was thought to show spirit, because her husband was supposed to lack it; which was untrue: Monsieur de Lieven was wholly superior to Madame. Madame de Lieven, of sharp and unpleasant features, is a common woman, wearisome, and arid, who has only one form of conversation, vulgar politics; moreover, she knows nothing, and hides her poverty of ideas beneath an abundance of words. When she finds herself among men of worth, her sterility silences her; she decks out her nullity with an air of superior *ennui*, as if she has the right to be bored; reduced by the ravages of time, and unable to prevent herself meddling in everything, the Dowager of Congresses arrived from Verona to bestow on Paris, with the permission of the magistrates of St. Petersburg, an account of the diplomatic puerilities of yesteryear. She chattered about the contents of private correspondence, and appeared prominently in regard to failed marriages. The novices among us were launched into the salons to learn about polite society and the art of keeping secrets; they confided their own, which elaborated on by Madame von Lieven, were transmuted to dull gossip. The Ministers, and those who aspired to become such, are all proud of being the protégés of a lady who had the honor to know Monsieur Metternich in the days when the great man, in order to relieve himself of the weight of business, amused himself by unpicking threads. Ridicule followed Madame von Lieven in Paris. A grave and pedantic theorist fell at Omphale's feet: *'Love, you destroyed Troy.'*



The days in London were divided thus: at ten in the morning, people went to an orgy, consisting of breakfast in the country; they returned to dine in London; they changed their clothes to parade through Bond Street or Hyde Park; they changed again to dine at seven-thirty; they changed again for the Opera; at midnight, they changed again for a party or a reception! What an enchanting life! I would have preferred the galleys a hundred times over. The acme of good taste was, after being unable to penetrate the ante-rooms of a private ball, to remain on the staircase blocked by the crowd, and find oneself face to face with the Duke of Somerset; a blessing which I once attained. The new breed of English people is infinitely more frivolous than us; their heads are turned by a *show*: if the Paris executioner arrived in London he would drive England wild. Did not Marshal Soult fill the ladies, with enthusiasm, like Blücher, whose moustache they kissed?

Our Marshal, who is no Antipater, Antigonus, Seleuceus, Antiochus or Ptolemy, no royal general of Alexander's, is a distinguished soldier, who pillaged Spain while making war, and from whom the Capuchins bought their lives with their paintings. But it is true that he published, in March 1814, a furious proclamation against Bonaparte, whom he welcomed in triumph a few days later: he has since performed his Easter Duty at St Thomas Aquinas. In London they show an old pair of his boots for a shilling.

Everyone famous soon visits the banks of the Thames and goes away again. In 1822 I found that great city full of memories of Bonaparte; they had gone from denigrating *Old Nick* to wild enthusiasm. Memories of Bonaparte swarmed there; his bust adorned every mantelpiece; prints of him glowed in every picture-seller's window; the colossal statue of him by Canova decorated the Duke of Wellington's staircase. Could not another sanctuary have been dedicated to Mars enchained? That deification seems rather the representation of a caretaker's vanity than a warrior's honor. – General you did not vanquish Napoleon at Waterloo, you merely broke the last link of a destiny already shattered.

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 4

#### More dispatches

After my official presentation to George IV, I saw him several times. The recognition of the Spanish colonies by England was shortly resolved; at least it seemed that the ships of those independent States were to be welcomed in the harbors of the British Empire under their own flag. My dispatch of the 7th of May gave an account of a conversation I had with Lord Londonderry, and of that Minister's thoughts. This dispatch, important then in the order of things, would be almost without interest to today's reader. Two things were to be distinguished as regards the Spanish colonies relative to England and France: commercial interests and political interests. I entered into the details of those interests. *'The more I see of the Marquis of Londonderry,'* I said to Monsieur de Montmorency *'the more subtle I find him. He is a man full of resource, who only ever says what he wishes to; one would sometimes be tempted to think him good-natured. He has the laughter in his voice, the look, something, of Monsieur Pozzo di Borgo. He does not exactly inspire trust.'*

The dispatch ends thus: *'If Europe is forced to recognize the de facto governments of America, all her politics should tend towards the generation of monarchies in the New World, instead of revolutionary republics which export their principles to us with the products of their soil.'*

*Reading this dispatch, Monsieur le Vicomte, you will doubtless experience, as I do, a feeling of satisfaction. A significant political step has already been achieved in having obliged England to desire our involvement in matters regarding which she would not have deigned to consult us six months ago. I congratulate myself as a good Frenchman on all which tends to re-establish our country in the high position which it ought to occupy among other nations.'*

This letter was the foundation for all my ideas and negotiations regarding colonial affairs with which I occupied myself during the War in Spain, almost a year before that war was actually declared.

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 5

The resumption of Parliamentary activity – A ball given on behalf of the Irish – A duel between the Duke of Bedford and the Duke of Buckingham – Dinner at Royal Lodge –  
The Marchioness of Conyngham and her secret

On the 17th of May I was at Covent Garden, in the Duke of York's box. The King appeared. That prince, once detested, was welcomed with acclamation such as he would never have received from the monks who once inhabited that ancient monastery. On the 26th, the Duke of York came to dine at the Embassy: George IV was tempted to do me the honor also; but he feared diplomatic jealousy on the part of my colleagues.

The Vicomte de Montmorency refused to enter into negotiations over the Spanish colonies with the Court of St James. I learnt, on the 19th of May, of the sudden death of Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu. That honest man had patiently endured his first dismissal from government; but events causing him to lose too much time he missed any further opportunity, since he lacked a second life to replace that which he had lost. The great name of *Richelieu* has only been transmitted to us via the female line.

Revolution continued in the Americas. I wrote to Monsieur de Montmorency:

No. 26.

London, 28th May 1822.

*'Peru has just adopted a monarchical constitution. European politics must exert all its energies on achieving a like result in the colonies which have declared their independence. The United States specifically fears the establishment of an empire in Mexico. If the New World remains republican as a whole, the monarchies of the Old World will die out.'*

There was much talk of distress among the Irish peasantry, and people danced for consolation. A grand ball held at the Opera, engaged all feeling souls. The King, encountering me in the corridor, asked me what I was doing there, and taking me by the arm, led me to his box.

The stalls, in the days when I was an exile, were rough and rowdy; sailors drank beer there, ate oranges, and shouted at the boxes. I once found myself next to a sailor who had arrived in a state of intoxication; he demanded to know where he was; I told him: 'Covent Garden. – A pretty garden, indeed!' he exclaimed, seized, like the gods in Homer, with inextinguishable laughter.

Invited recently to an evening at Lord Lansdowne's, His Lordship presented me to a severe-looking lady of sixty-six: she was dressed in crepe, wore a black veil like a tiara on her white hair, and resembled some queen who had abdicated. She greeted me in solemn tones, with three mispronounced quotations from Le Génie du Christianisme; then she told me with no less solemnity: '*I am Mrs. Siddons.*' If she had said: '*I am Lady Macbeth*', I would have believed her. I had seen her previously on the stage at the height of her powers. It was necessary only to have lived long enough to find the debris of one century hurled onto the shore of another by Time's waves.

The visitors from France I received in London were Monsieur le Duc and Madame la Duchesse de Guiche, whom I will speak about in talking of Prague; Monsieur le Marquis de Custine, whom I had

known when he was a child at Fervaques; and Madame la Vicomtesse de Noailles, as pleasant, spiritual and gracious as if she were still fourteen and wandering through the lovely gardens at Méréville.

People tired of receptions; the Ambassadors dreamed of going on leave: Prince Esterhazy prepared to depart for Vienna; he hoped to be summoned to the Congress, since they were already talking of a Congress. Monsieur Rothschild returned to France, he and his brother having arranged the Russian loan of 23 million roubles. The Duke of Bedford fought with the high-spending Duke of Buckingham, at the bottom of a hollow, in Kensington Gardens; a song injurious to the King of France, brought from Paris and printed in the London papers, amused the radical English scoundrels who laugh without knowing at what.

I left on the 6th of June for Royal Lodge, where the King was. He had invited me to dinner, and to stay the night.

I saw George IV again on the 12th, 13th and 14th, at a levee, at a drawing-room reception, and at a ball given by his Majesty. On the 24th, I gave a dinner for the Prince and Princess of Denmark; the Duke of York was invited.

The kindness, with which the Marchioness of Conyngham treated me, might have been a thing of importance once: she told me that His Majesty's idea of a trip to the continent had not been entirely abandoned. I hid this great secret religiously in my breast. What important dispatches might have been written about this word from a favorite, in the age of Mesdames de Verneuil, de Maintenon, Des Ursins and de Pompadour! Besides, it would have been inappropriate for me to stir myself to obtain information from the Court of St James: you speak in vain, no one hears.

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 6

#### Portraits of the Ministers

Lord Londonderry was particularly impenetrable: he hindered one by his sincerity as a Minister and at the same time his reserve as a man. He explained his political views frankly in a most frigid manner and kept a profound silence where events were concerned. He seemed as indifferent about what he said as about what he did not; one did not know what to think of what he revealed or of what he hid. He would not have budged if you had *exploded a firecracker in his ear*, as Saint-Simon has it.

Lord Londonderry possessed a kind of Irish eloquence which often caused hilarity in the Lords, and gaiety amongst the public: his *blunders* were celebrated, but he sometimes attained marks of eloquence which swayed a crowd, for example his speeches regarding the battle of Waterloo: I reminded him of them.

The Earl of Harrowby was Lord President of the Council; he spoke with propriety, lucidity and knowledge of the facts. It would have been considered unseemly in London if the President had expressed himself with prolixity and loquacity. Otherwise he was a perfect gentleman in manner. One day, in the Paquis, at Geneva, an Englishman was announced: Lord Harrowby entered; I barely recognized him: he had lost his former king; mine was in exile. It was the last time the England of my period of grandeur appeared before me.

I have mentioned Mr. Peel and Lord Westmoreland in *The Congress of Verona*.

I do not know if Lord Bathurst is descended from and is the grandson of the Lord Bathurst of whom Sterne wrote: *'This nobleman, I say, is a prodigy! For at eighty five he has all the wit and promptness of a man of thirty, a disposition to be pleased, and a power to please others, beyond whatever I knew.'* Lord Bathurst, the Minister of whom I am speaking, was educated and polite; he kept up the traditions of old French manners and good company. He had three or four daughters who ran, or rather flew like sea terns, beside the waves, slender, white, and weightless. What has become of them? Have they fallen into the Tiber like the young Englishwoman of that name?

Lord Liverpool was not, like Lord Londonderry, the leading Minister; but he was the Minister who was most influential and most respected. He enjoyed reputation as a religious man and one of good will, a thing so potent for those who possess it; the man was approached with the trust one bestows on one's father; no action appeared good if it was not approved by this saintly person, invested with an authority greatly superior to that of mere talent. Lord Liverpool was the son of Charles Jenkinson, Earl of Liverpool, Baron Hawkesbury, favorite of Lord Bute. Almost all the English Statesmen first pursued a literary career, in pieces of verse of varying quality, and in articles, generally excellent, inserted in the reviews. There is a portrait of this 1st Earl of Liverpool when he was private secretary to Lord Bute; his family was in great distress: vanity, puerile at all times, is doubtless still more so today; but let us not forget that our most fiery revolutionaries acquired their hatred of society from natural disadvantage or social inferiority.

It is possible that Lord Liverpool, inclined to reform, and to whom Mr. Canning owed his last Ministry, was influenced, despite the strictness of his religious principles, by unpleasant memories. At the time

when I knew Lord Liverpool, he was an inspired Puritan almost. He lived alone, through habit, with an elderly sister, some miles from London. He spoke little; his expression was gloomy; he often cupped his ear with the air of listening to something sad: one would have said he was listening to his last years falling, like drops of winter rain on the paving stones. For the rest, he had few passions, and lived according to God's law.

Mr. Croker, Secretary of the Admiralty, celebrated as an author and orator, belonged to the school of Mr. Pitt, as did Mr. Canning; but he was more disillusioned than the latter. He occupied one of those gloomy apartments in Whitehall, from a window of which Charles I emerged to walk to his scaffold erected on the same level. One is astonished on entering London at the buildings where the Directors of organizations sit whose power is felt at the ends of the earth. A handful of men in black frock coats at a bare table: that is all you will find: yet these are the directors of English shipping, or the members of that company of merchants, successors to the Mogul emperors, who claim two hundred million subjects in India.

Two years ago, Mr. Croker came to visit me at the Marie-Thérèse Infirmary. He remarked on the similarity of our opinions and fates. Events separated us from society; politics creates its solitaires as religion creates its anchorites. When man inhabits the desert, he finds there some distant image of the infinite being who, living alone in the immensity, watches worlds complete their revolutions.

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 7

#### More of my dispatches

During the course of June and July, affairs in Spain began to seriously concern the Cabinet in London. Lord Londonderry and the majority of his Ambassadors when speaking of these matters displayed anxiety and an almost laughable dread. The government feared that in the event of a rupture we would need to defeat the Spanish; the Ministers of other powers trembled lest we be defeated; they always envisaged our army adopting the tricolor cockade.

In my dispatch of 28th June, no. 35, the English position is faithfully reflected:

No. 35

*‘London, the 28th June 1822.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*It is easier to tell you what Lord Londonderry thinks, regarding Spain, than it would be to penetrate the secret instructions given to Sir William A’Court; however I will neglect nothing in my attempts to procure the information you requested in your last dispatch, no. 18. If I have judged the political position of the English Cabinet and the character of Lord Londonderry correctly, I am convinced that Sir William A’Court is carrying almost nothing in writing. He will have been recommended, verbally, to observe the parties without getting involved in their quarrels. The Cabinet of St James does not like the Cortès, but it despises Ferdinand. It will do nothing for the Royalists: that is certain. Moreover, it suffices that our influence is exercised in favor of opinions where English influence supports opposite opinions. Our reviving prosperity is inspiring lively envy. Among the Statesmen here, there is certainly a vague fear of the revolutionary passions that are traversing Spain; but this fear is silent in the face of private interests: of such a kind that if on the one side Great Britain could exclude our goods from the Peninsula, and on the other she could recognize the independence of the Spanish colonies, she would readily involve herself in events, and console herself concerning the problems which would newly overwhelm the continental monarchies. The same principle which prevents England withdrawing her Ambassador from Constantinople causes her to send an Ambassador to Madrid: she holds back from the common fate, and only concerns herself with the part she might play in the revolutions of empires.*

*I have the honor, etc.’*

Returning, in my dispatch of the 16th July, no. 40, to the news from Spain, I said to Monsieur Montmorency:

No. 40.

*‘London, the 16th of July 1822.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*The English newspapers, following the French newspapers, this morning carried the news from Madrid, up to the 18th inclusive. I had expected no better of the King of Spain, and was not surprised. If that wretched Prince must perish, the nature of the catastrophe is not a matter of indifference to the rest of the world; a dagger would only cut down the monarch, a scaffold might end the monarchy. It already smacks far too much of the judgement meted out to Charles I and Louis XVI; Heaven preserve us from a third*

*judgement whereby such crimes might seem to establish by their authority popular validity, and a body of law hostile to kings! We can now wait on everything: a declaration of war on the part of the Spanish government is among the eventualities that the French government must have foreseen. In any case, we will soon be obliged to end the ‘cordon sanitaire’, since, once September is past, if the plague does not reappear in Barcelona, it would be truly derisory to speak of a cordon sanitaire; it would then be necessary to declare it frankly to be an army, and spell out the reasons which oblige us to maintain that army’s presence. Would that not be equivalent to declaring war on the Cortès? On the other hand, how could we dissolve the cordon sanitaire? That act of weakness would compromise French security, debase government, and revive among us the hopes of the revolutionary faction.*

*I have the honor to be, etc., etc., etc.’*



## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 8

Discussion about the Congress of Verona – A letter to Monsieur Montmorency; his reply which allows me to sense a refusal – Monsieur Villèle's letter is more favorable – I write to Madame de Duras – A note from Monsieur de Villèle to Madame de Duras

Since the Congresses of Vienna and Aix-la-Chapelle, the Princes of Europe were obsessed with congresses: it was there that one amused oneself and divided things up between the nations. Scarcely had the Congress, begun at Troppau and continued at Laibach, ended, than they thought of convoking another in Vienna, Ferrara, or Verona: the affairs of Spain offered an opportunity to expedite the event. Each country had already designated its Ambassador.

In London I witnessed everyone preparing to leave for Verona: as my head was full of the events in Spain, and as I dreamed of a project to bring France honor, I thought I might be of some use at the new Congress by making myself known in a connection which had not been considered. I had written to Monsieur de Montmorency on the 24th of May; but did not find favor. The Minister's lengthy reply was evasive, embarrassed, and tortuous; a marked distancing of himself seemed to me to be ill-concealed beneath the benevolence; he finished with this paragraph:

*'Since I am writing confidentially, dear Vicomte, I will tell you what I would not say in an official dispatch, but what personal observation, and the advice too of those who well know the terrain in which you are placed, have prompted. Have you considered firstly that, vis-à-vis the English Minister, one must be cautious of certain effects of jealousy and mood that are always likely to be engendered regarding any direct marks of favor from the King, or of credit in society? Tell me, have you not chanced to notice traces of such?'*

Through whom had complaints concerning my *credit* with the King and in *society* (that is to say, I assume, with the Marchioness Conyngham) been transmitted to the Vicomte de Montmorency? I do not know.

Anticipating, by this private dispatch, that my cause was lost with the Foreign Minister, I addressed myself to Monsieur de Villèle, then my friend, and who was not greatly inclined towards his colleague. In his letter of the 5th of May 1822, he at first replied favorably to me.

*'Paris, the 5th of May, 1822.*

*'I must thank you,' he says, 'for all you have achieved on our behalf in London; the decisions of that Court regarding the Spanish colonies should not influence our own; our position is quite different; we must avoid above all being prevented, by a war with Spain, from acting as we ought to elsewhere, should affairs in the Orient lead to new political alignments in Europe.*

*We will not allow the French government to be dishonored by failing to participate in events which may arise from the current world situation: others may intervene to greater advantage, none with greater courage and loyalty.*

*Others are greatly mistaken, I believe, concerning both our country's true means, and the power that the King's government can still exercise through prescribed forms; these command more resources than they appear to think, and I trust that we will know how to reveal them on occasion.*

*You will support us, my dear friend, during these major events if they occur. We know it, and count on it; the honor will be yours, and not merely according to your share in the matters currently in question, but according to services rendered; let us vie with all zeal as to who will distinguish themselves most.*

*I do not know in truth if all this will turn into a Congress; but, in any case, I will not forget what you have said to me.*

*JH. DE VILLÈLE.'*

At this first sign of good intent, I put pressure on the Minister of Finance through Madame la Duchesse de Duras; she had already lent me the support of her friendship regarding the Court's neglect in 1814. She soon received this note from Monsieur de Villèle:

*'All we could say has been said; all that it is in my heart and my judgement to do for the public good, and for my friend, has been done and will be done: be certain of it. I have no need of being preached at, nor converted, I repeat; I act from conviction and sentiment.*

*Accept, Madame, the homage of my affectionate respect.'*

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 9

#### The death of Lord Londonderry

My final dispatch, dated the 9th of August, announced to Monsieur de Montmorency that Lord Londonderry was leaving for Vienna, between the 15th and the 20th. A sudden momentous curtailment of mortal plans was revealed to me; I thought I would only have to communicate news of human affairs to the Very Christian King's council, and I had to give an account of the affairs of God:

*'London, 12th of August 1822: 4 o'clock in the afternoon.*

*'Dispatch transmitted to Paris via the Calais telegraph-station.*

*The Marquis of Londonderry died suddenly at nine this morning, in his country house at North-Cray.'*

No. 49.

*'London, the 13th of August 1822.'*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*If the weather caused no delay to my telegraphed dispatch, and if no accident occurred to my special courier, who left here at four, I anticipate that you will have received the first news on the Continent of Lord Londonderry's sudden death.*

*His death is tragic in the extreme. The noble Marquis was in London on Friday; he had a minor headache; he had himself bled between his shoulder-blades. After which he left for North-Cray, where the Marchioness of Londonderry had been staying for the past month. Fever declared itself on Saturday the 10th and Sunday the 11th; but it seemed to recede between Sunday night and Monday morning, and on the Monday morning, the 12th, the illness appeared so improved, that his wife who was looking after him, thought she might leave him for a moment. Lord Londonderry, whose mind was disturbed, finding himself alone, rose, went into his office, seized a razor, and slit his jugular at the first stroke. He fell, bathed in blood, at the feet of the doctor who came to his aid.*

*This deplorable incident has been concealed as much as possible, but it has reached the public in garbled form, and given birth to all kinds of rumors.*

*Why should Lord Londonderry cut short his life? He had neither passions nor misfortunes; he was more secure in his position than ever. He was preparing to leave the following Thursday. He would have turned what is a business journey into a pleasant excursion. He was due to return on the 15th of October for a shooting trip arranged in advance, to which he had invited me. Providence has decreed otherwise, and Lord Londonderry has followed the Duc de Richelieu.'*

Here are a few details which did not appear in my dispatches.

On returning to London, George IV told me that Lord Londonderry had brought him the plan of instruction which he had drawn up for himself and which he would follow at the Congress. George IV took the manuscript, to consider its terms more closely, and began to read in a loud voice. He noticed that

Lord Londonderry was not listening, and that his gaze was directed towards the ceiling of the room: “*What is the matter, Milord?*” the King asked. – *Sire,*” replied the Marquis, “*here is that insupportable John (a jockey) at the door; he won’t go away, though I am always ordering him to do so.*” The King, astonished, folded the document and said: “*You are ill, Milord: go home; have yourself bled.*” Lord Londonderry left and went off to buy the knife with which he cut his throat.

On the 13th of August, I continued my dispatch to Monsieur de Montmorency.

*‘They have sent couriers everywhere, to the spas, to the coastal resorts, to the country houses, to seek the absent Ministers. At the moment when the incident occurred none of them were in London. They are expected today or tomorrow; they will hold a council meeting, but will be unable to decide anything, since, in the final result, it is the King who will nominate one of them, and the King is in Edinburgh. It is probable that His Majesty will not hasten to make a choice during the holiday season. Lord Londonderry’s death is a disaster for England: he was not loved, but he was feared; the Radicals detested him, but they were afraid of him. Singularly brave, he impressed the Opposition who dared not insult him too much at the dispatch box or in the newspapers. His imperturbable sang-froid, his profound indifference to men and things, his despotic instinct and secret contempt for constitutional freedoms, made him a Minister fitted to struggle with success against the tendencies of the century. His faults appeared qualities in an age when extremism and democracy threaten society.*

*I have the honor, etc.’*

*‘London, the 15th of August 1822.*

*‘Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*Subsequent information has confirmed what I had the honor to tell you regarding the death of the Marquis of Londonderry, in my regular dispatch, no. 49, of the day before yesterday. Only, the fatal instrument with which the unfortunate Minister cut his jugular vein was a pen-knife and not a razor as I advised you previously. The Coroner’s report, which you will see in the newspapers, will tell you all. An inquest into the death of Great-Britain’s leading Minister, as over the body of a murderer, adds something even more dreadful to that event.*

*You doubtless now know Monsieur le Vicomte that Lord Londonderry had shown signs of mental alienation a few days before his suicide, and that the King himself perceived them. A small circumstance to which I paid no attention, but which I have recalled since the tragedy, is worth relating. I went to see the Marquis of Londonderry, a fortnight or so ago. Contrary to his custom, and to that of the country, he received me familiarly in his dressing-room. He was about to shave himself, and while laughing with a sardonic laugh he made me a eulogy on English razors. I complimented him on the impending closure of the Parliamentary session. “Yes,” he said, “It will have to end or I will.”*

*I have the honor, etc.’*

All that the English Radicals and the French Liberals have said of the death of Lord Londonderry, namely: that he killed himself because of political depression, feeling that the principles opposed to his own would triumph, is a pure fable invented by the imagination of some, the party bias and foolishness of others. Lord Londonderry was not the man to repent of having sinned against humanity, for which he

scarcely cared, nor the intellectuals of the period, for whom he had a profound contempt: his insanity was introduced into the Castlereagh family through the female line.

It was decided that the Duke of Wellington, accompanied by Lord Clanwilliam, would take Lord Londonderry's place at the Congress. The official instructions were reduced to these: *forget about Italy completely: don't get involved with affairs in Spain: negotiate regarding those of the Orient, towards maintaining the peace without adding to Russia's influence*. Luck as always was with Mr. Canning, and the Foreign Affairs portfolio was only entrusted to Lord Bathurst, Minister for the Colonies, for the *interim*.

I was present at Lord Londonderry's funeral, at Westminster, on the 29th of August. The Duke of Wellington seemed moved; Lord Liverpool was obliged to cover his face with his hat to hide his tears. Outside cries of insult could be heard, and of delight when the body entered the Abbey: were Colbert and Louis XIV any more respected? The living can teach the dead nothing; the dead, on the contrary, instruct the living.

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 10

A new letter from Monsieur de Montmorency – A trip to Hartwell – A note from Monsieur de Villèle announcing my nomination to the Congress

#### *A LETTER FROM MONSIEUR DE MONTMORENCY*

*‘Paris, 17th of August.*

*Though there are no dispatches of any importance to entrust to your faithful Hyacinthe, I desire however to send him on to you, noble Vicomte, according to your own wish, and the one which he has expressed to me on behalf of Madame de Chateaubriand, that of seeing him returned promptly to you. I will take advantage of it to address a few highly confidential words to you on the profound impression made here, as in London, by the news of the dreadful death of the Marquis of Londonderry, and also, at the same time, on that matter in which you seem rightly to take an exaggerated and exclusive interest. The King’s council has profited from it, and fixed for today, immediately after the closure of the session which took place this very morning, a discussion of the principal direction to be decided upon, the instructions to be given, and likewise the representatives to be selected: the first question is to decide whether there shall be one or many. You have expressed, it seems to me, a fraction of the astonishment felt that they could think of sending ....., by not preferring you to him, you know very well that he could not do the same job for us. If after mature consideration, we do not believe it possible to profit from the goodwill you have shown us with great frankness, in this regard, it would without doubt be for serious reasons which I would communicate to you equally frankly: the adjournment is rather favorable to your wishes, in this sense, that it would be totally inappropriate, for you and for us, for you to leave London in the next few weeks, before the ministerial decision is made, one which does not fail to occupy the whole Cabinet. It strikes everyone in the same way, as friends told me the other day: “If Monsieur de Chateaubriand were to come straight to Paris, it would be very annoying for him to be obliged to return to London.” So we await that important nomination, on their King’s return from Edinburgh. Sir Charles Stuart said yesterday that the Duke of Wellington would certainly go to the Congress; Monsieur Hyde de Neuville arrived yesterday in good health. I was delighted to see him. I renew all my inviolable sentiments towards you, noble Vicomte,*

*MONTMORENCY.’*

This fresh letter from Monsieur de Montmorency, containing ironic phrases, plainly confirmed to me that he did not wish me to attend the Congress.

I gave a dinner on Saint-Louis’ day in honor of Louis XVIII, and paid a visit to Hartwell in memory of that King’s exile; I fulfilled a duty rather than enjoying a pleasure. Unfortunate Royals are now so common that one is scarcely interested in places except those where genius or virtue lived. In the little park at Hartwell I only saw Louis XVI’s daughter.

Finally and suddenly I received this unexpected note from Monsieur de Villèle which gave the lie to my presentiments and put an end to my uncertainty:

*‘27th of August 1822.*

*My dear Chateaubriand, it has been decided that as soon as the proprieties regarding the King's return to London allow, you will be authorized to return to Paris, in order to travel from there to Vienna or Verona as one of the three plenipotentiaries charged with representing France at the Congress. The two others will be Messieurs de Caraman and de La Ferronnays; which does not prevent Monsieur le Vicomte de Montmorency leaving for Vienna the day after tomorrow, in order to assist at the discussions which may take place there before the Congress. He is to return to Paris when the sovereigns depart for Verona.*

*This is for your eyes alone. I am happy that the matter has taken the direction you desire; my heart is all yours.'*

After this note, I prepared to leave.

## BOOK XXVII

### CHAPTER 11

#### The end of the old England – Charlotte Reflections – I leave London

The lightning which dogs my footsteps follows me everywhere. With Lord Londonderry the old England, which up till then had struggled amidst a whirlpool of innovation, expired. Mr. Canning rose: pride led him to speak at the rostrum in the language of the propagandist. After him the Duke of Wellington appeared, a conservative who came to destroy: when the judgement of nations is pronounced, it will be seen that the hand which ought to have lifted up, only knew how to drag down. Lord Grey, O'Connell, all the specialists in ruination, worked successively at the demise of the old institutions. Parliamentary Reform, the Emancipation of Ireland, things which were excellent in themselves, became, through the un-healthiness of the times, causes of destruction. Fear increases evils; if one is not strongly affected by threats, one can resist them with a modicum of success.

What need had England to indulge in our recent disturbances? Immured in its island, nurturing its national enmities, it remained protected. What need had the Court of St James to dread Irish Separation? Ireland was merely England's dinghy: cut the painter, and the dinghy, separated from the mother vessel, would founder amongst the waves. Lord Liverpool himself had sad presentiments. I dined with him one day: after dinner we chatted by a window looking out over the Thames; downstream one could see a section of the city looming through the smoke and fog. I praised, to my host, the solidity of the English monarchy, maintaining as it did the balance between freedom and power. The venerable Lord, raising and extending his arm, pointed towards the city, saying: 'Where is the solidity in vast cities like these? One serious insurrection, in London, and all will be lost.'

It seems to me that I chart a course through England, similar to that which I once made through the ruins of Athens, Jerusalem, Memphis and Carthage. Summoning up the centuries of Albion, passing from famous person to famous person, watching them vanish one by one, I experience a sort of mournful vertigo. Where are those brilliant and tumultuous times in which Shakespeare and Milton, Henry VIII and Elizabeth, Cromwell and William III, Pitt and Burke lived? All that is over; superiority and mediocrity, love and hatred, happiness and misery, oppressors and oppressed, executioners and victims, kings and people, all rest in the same silence and the same dust. What nothingness is ours then, if the most vibrant portion of the human species inhabits it, genius which casts a shadow of former times into the present generations, but no longer has life itself, and is disregarded as if it had never been?

How many times has England been invaded over the course of the centuries! How many revolutions has she passed through to arrive at the brink of the greatest, most profound of revolutions, one which will encompass posterity! I have been witness to those notable British Parliaments in all their power: what has become of them? I saw England in her traditional prosperity, living her traditional way of life: everywhere little solitary churches with their towers, Gray's country churchyards, everywhere narrow sandy roads, valleys filled with cattle, moorlands dotted with sheep, parks, country houses, towns: a few large woods, a few birds, the wind off the sea. These were not the fields of Andalusia where I came across old Christians and young lovers, among the voluptuous palaces of the Moors, among aloes and palm-trees.



*'Quid dignum memorare tuis, Hispania, terris  
Vox human valet?'*

'What human voice, O Spain, is worthy of recalling your shores?'

This was not that Roman *Campagne* whose irresistible charm ceaselessly called to me; these waves, this sunlight, were not those which bathed and illuminated the promontory on which Plato taught his disciples, that Sunium where I heard the cicada asking Minerva in vain for the hearth of the priests of her temple; but ultimately, she was charming and formidable, that England, surrounded as she was by her ships, covered by her herds, and professing the religion of her great men.

Today, her valleys are obscured by the fumes from forges and factories, her roads are changed to iron tracks; and along those roads, instead of Milton and Shakespeare, restless trains travel. Already the cradles of science, Oxford and Cambridge, take on a deserted air: their colleges and gothic chapels, half-disused, trouble the sight; in their cloisters beside the tombstones of the Middle Ages, rest the forgotten marble annals of the ancient peoples of Greece; ruins guarding ruins.

Beside those monuments, around which a void is beginning to form, I left the rediscovered days of my springtime; I separated from my youth for a second time, on the same shore where I had abandoned it once before: Charlotte had suddenly reappeared like that light, the joy of the darkness, which, retarded in its monthly course, will rise at midnight. If you are not too weary, go and seek in Book X of these *Memoirs* the effect that the sudden sight of that woman had on me in 1822. When she knew me previously, I had not then met those other Englishwomen a crowd of whom surrounded me in my days of power and fame: their homage brought a kind of mildness to my fate. Now, when sixteen long years have vanished since my London embassy, and when so much else has been destroyed, my gaze returns towards that daughter of the land of Desdemona and Juliet: she is no less important to my thoughts than that day when her unexpected presence relit the torch of my memories. A new Epimenides, waking after a long sleep, I fix my eyes on a beacon, ever more radiant now that the others along the shore are extinguished; except for one that will shine long after me.

I have not related all that concerns Charlotte in the preceding books of my *Memoirs*: she came with some of her family to see me in France, when I was Minister there in 1823. By one of those inexplicable human misfortunes, preoccupied as I was with a war on which the fate of the French monarchy depended, something was doubtless lacking in my response, since Charlotte, on returning to England, sent me a letter in which she appeared wounded by the coldness of my reception of her. I dared neither write to her nor return the literary fragments she had sent me, which I had promised to add to, and forward to her. If it were true that she had real cause for complaint, I would throw what I have written of my first journey abroad into the fire.

It has often occurred to me to seek clarification of my doubts; but how can I return to England, I who am too weak even to dare visit the native rock where I have marked out my tomb? I am afraid of sensation now: time, in stealing my youth, has left me like those soldiers whose limbs remain on the field of battle; my blood, having a smaller path in which to circulate, reaches my heart with so rapid a flow that this old organ of my joys and sorrows beats as though ready to burst. The desire to burn what appertains to Charlotte, even though she may have been treated there with religious respect, mingles in me with the wish to destroy these *Memoirs*: if they still belonged to me, or if I could buy them back, I might succumb

to the temptation. I have such a disgust with everything, such a contempt for the present and the immediate future, so firm a persuasion that men from now on, taken together as 'the public' (and for several centuries ahead), will be pitiful, that I blush to employ my last moments in telling of things past, in depicting a lost world whose language and name are no longer known.

Man is as much deceived by the success of his wishes as by their disappointment: I had desired, contrary to my natural instincts, to go to the congress of Verona; profiting from one of Monsieur de Villèle's prejudices, I had led him to force Monsieur de Montmorency's hand. Well, my real inclination was for other than what I had obtained; doubtless I would have been annoyed if they had made me stay in England; but soon the idea of going to see Lady Sutton, of making a tour of the three kingdoms, would have overcome that false wave of ambition, something not fundamental to my nature. God ordered things otherwise and I left for Verona: hence the change in my life, my Ministry, the Spanish War, my triumph, and my fall, soon followed by that of the monarchy.

One of the two fine children in whom Charlotte had begged me to interest myself in 1822 has just been to visit me in Paris; today he is Captain Sutton; he is married to a charming young lady, and tells me that his mother, who is very ill, has recently spent the winter in London.

I embarked at Dover on the 8th of September 1822, the same port from which, twenty-two years earlier, Monsieur Lassagne, of Neuchâtel, had set sail. Between that first departure and this moment when I have again taken up my pen, thirty nine years have elapsed. When a man reads or listens to an account of his past life, he seems to be viewing on a deserted sea the wake of a vanished vessel; he seems to hear the tolling of a bell whose ancient tower is lost to sight.

## **End of Book XXVII**

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 1

#### The deliverance of the King of Spain – My dismissal

Revised: December 1846.

Here in its place in time comes Le Congrès de Vérone which I published in two volumes. If anyone should wish to read it again, they will find it everywhere. My Spanish War, the great political event of my life, was an immense undertaking. For the first time, the Legitimacy was going to burn powder under the white banner, to fire its first cannon after that cannon-fire of the Empire that will echo to all posterity. To bestride Spain with a single step, to succeed on the same soil where the man of history's armies had formerly met defeat, to do in six months what he failed to do in seven years, who could have aspired to so prodigious an outcome? Yet that is what I achieved; though how many curses fell on my head at the gaming-table where the Restoration had seated me! I had before me a France hostile to the Bourbons and two great Foreign Ministers, Prince von Metternich and Mr. Canning. Not a day passed without my receiving letters prophesying disaster since the war with Spain was not at all popular in France, or in Europe. Indeed, after my success in the Peninsula, my downfall was not long in coming.

In our joy over the telegraph message which announced the King of Spain's release, we Ministers hastened to the palace. There I had a presentiment of my fall: I met with a bucket of cold-water over my head which restored me to my usual humility. The King and Monsieur did not notice us. Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême, overjoyed by her husband's triumph, had eyes for nobody. That immortal victim wrote a letter of Ferdinand's deliverance ending with this exclamation, a sublime one issuing from the mouth of Louis XVI's daughter: *'So here is the proof that one can save an unfortunate king!'*

On the Sunday, I returned before the meeting of the council to pay my court to the Royal Family; the august Princess gave each of my colleagues a pleasant word: to me she addressed no comment. I did not merit, it is true, such an honor. Silence from the Orphan of the Temple, can never be deemed ingratitude: Heaven has a right to the earth's worship and owes nothing to anyone.

I hung on, after that, till Whitsuntide; yet my friends were not without their anxieties; they often said to me: *'You will be fired tomorrow. – Straight away if you like,'* I would reply. On Whit Sunday, the 6th of June 1824, I made my way to Monsieur's outer rooms: an usher came to tell me that I was required. It was Hyacinthe, my secretary. He told me on seeing me that I was no longer the Minister. I opened the envelope he presented to me; there I found this note from Monsieur de Villèle:

*'Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I am obeying the King's command in at once communicating to Your Excellency an order His Majesty has just issued.*

*"The Sieur Comte de Villèle, President of our Council of Ministers, is entrusted for the interim with the Foreign Affairs portfolio, replacing the Sieur Vicomte de Chateaubriand."*

This order was in Monsieur de Rainneville's handwriting, he who is so good as to be embarrassed by it still, when he meets me. Ah! Goodness me! Do I know Monsieur de Rainneville? Have I ever given him a thought? I encounter him often enough. Has he ever perceived my knowledge of his handwriting on the ordinance which erased me from the list of Ministers?

And yet, what had I done? Where were my supposed intrigues and ambitions? Did I go for secret solitary walks in the depths of the Bois de Boulogne because I desired Monsieur de Villèle's place? It was that strange life of mine that ruined me. I was foolish enough to remain as Heaven has made me, and, since I wished for nothing, they thought I desired everything. Today I am well aware that my isolated life was a great mistake. *'What! You don't wish to be anything! Off with you, then! We don't like it when a man despises what we adore, and thinks himself entitled to scorn the mediocrity of our lives.'*

The problems of wealth and the inconveniences of poverty followed me to my lodgings in the Rue de l'Université: on the day of my dismissal, I had an immense dinner booked at the Ministry; I had to send my apologies to the guests, and squeeze three vast courses for forty persons into my little kitchen for two. Montmirel and his staff set to work, and cramming dripping-pans, saucepans, and bowls into every corner, he found shelter for his re-heated masterpiece. An old friend came to share my first meal as a marooned sailor. Town and Court hastened to me, since there was an outcry at the brutality of my dismissal, after the service I had just rendered; they were convinced my disgrace would be of short duration; they adopted liberal airs in consoling me for my few days bad luck, at the end of which they would be able to provide a fruitful reminder to the unfortunate man on his return to power that they had not abandoned him.

They were wrong; their courage was wasted on me: they had counted on my being commonplace, on my sniveling, on my possessing the ambition of a lap-dog, on my willingness to confess myself at fault, to go stalking after those who had chased me away: that was to comprehend me badly. I departed, without even claiming the salary that was due to me, without accepting a single favor or a single farthing from the Court; I shut my door on those who had betrayed me; I spurned the crowd's condolences and took up weapons. Then they all dispersed; universal condemnation erupted, and my stance, which had appeared admirable at first to the salons and ante-chambers, seemed appalling.

After my dismissal, would it not have been better to keep silent? Had not the brutality of the proceedings rallied the public to me? Monsieur de Villèle has repeatedly said that the letter of dismissal was delayed; because of this accident, it had unfortunately been handed to me at the Palace; perhaps it was so; but when one plays a game, one should take account of chance; above all one should not write, to a friend that one values, a letter of the sort one would be ashamed to address to a guilty valet, whom one would kick out onto the pavement, without ceremony or remorse. The Villèle party's irritation with me was all the greater in that they wanted to appropriate my success, and because I had displayed a grasp of matters about which I was supposed to know nothing.

No doubt (as they said at the time) with silence and moderation I would have won praise from that species that lives in perpetual adoration of the portfolio; by doing penance for my innocence, I would have prepared my way for re-joining the Council. It would have been better in a commonplace way; but that was to take me for what I am not; it assumed a desire to grasp the helm of State once more, a wish to make my way; a desire and a wish that would not have occurred to me in a thousand years.

The idea I had of representative government led to my joining the opposition; systematic opposition seems to me the only kind suitable for that kind of government; the opposition called that of *conscience* is powerless. Conscience can judge a *moral* issue, but not an *intellectual* one. There is no choice but to place oneself under a leader, one who can distinguish between good and bad law. If not, then a representative may mistake his own stupidity for conscience, and vote accordingly. The opposition called that of *conscience* consists in drifting between parties, gnawing at the leash, even voting, according to circumstance, for the government, being magnanimous in one's rage; an opposition of mischievous mutiny among soldiers, of calculated ambition among leaders. To the extent that England has remained healthy, it never had other than a systematic opposition: one entered and left it with one's friends; on relinquishing the portfolio one went to sit on the opposition benches. Since one was assumed to have been removed for not wishing to accept a system, that system, remaining vested in the crown, had of necessity to be opposed. Now, the men merely representing principles, systematic opposition only sought to change the *principles*, while handing over the attack on them to *men*.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 2

The Opposition follows me

My downfall made a great noise: those who appeared most satisfied criticized the manner of it. I have since learnt that Monsieur de Villèle hesitated; Monsieur de Corbière decided the matter: '*If he returns through one door of the Council chamber*', he is supposed to have said, '*I leave through the other.*' They allowed me to depart: it was obvious that they would prefer Monsieur de Corbière to me. I did not like him: I troubled him, he drove me out: he did right.

The day after my dismissal and the following days, the Journal des Débats carried these words which do Monsieur Bertin so many honors:

*'For a second time Monsieur de Chateaubriand has undergone the ordeal of formal dismissal.'*

*He was dismissed in 1816, as Minister of State, for attacking, in his immortal work Monarchy according to the Charter, the famous decree of the 5th of September, which proclaimed the dissolution of the 'Unparalleled Chamber' of 1815. Messieurs de Villèle and Corbière were simply Deputies then, leaders of the Royalist opposition, and it was for taking on the mantle of their defence that Monsieur de Chateaubriand became a victim of Ministerial wrath.*

*In 1824, Monsieur de Chateaubriand is again dismissed, and it is by Messieurs de Villèle and Corbière, now Ministers, that he is sacrificed. A remarkable thing! In 1816, he was punished for speaking out; in 1824, they punish him for saying nothing; his crime is to have kept silent during the debate regarding the interest rate on Government bonds. Disgrace is not always a disaster; public opinion, the ultimate judge, will tell us in which class Monsieur de Chateaubriand's must be placed; it will also tell us to whom today's order will be most fatal, the vanquisher or the vanquished.*

*Who said, at the start of the session, that in this manner we would spoil the whole outcome of the Spanish enterprise? What is needed this year is simply the law regarding the seven-year term (but the whole law), and the budget. The business of Spain, the Orient and the Americas, conducted as it was being, prudently and silently, would have been resolved; the brightest of futures would have been before us; they wanted to gather unripe fruit; it has not fallen, and they thought to remedy haste by violence.*

*Anger and envy are bad counsellors; States are not governed by passion, or in fits and starts.*

*P.S. The law regarding the seven-year term was passed, this evening, in the Chamber of Deputies. One might say that Monsieur de Chateaubriand's doctrines have triumphed after that Minister's departure. This law, which he conceived some time ago, as an addition to our institutions, will forever, along with the War in Spain, mark his term in office. It is wholly regrettable that Monsieur de Corbière, on Saturday, prevented one who was then still his illustrious colleague from speaking. The Chamber of Peers would at least have heard his swansong.*

*As for ourselves, it is with the greatest regret that we return to our path of struggle, from which we had hoped to be freed forever by the unification of the Royalists; but honor, political loyalty, the well-being of France, do not allow us to falter in the course which we must take.'*

The signal for action was thus given. Monsieur de Villèle was not too alarmed at first; he failed to realize the weight of opinion. It took several years to defeat him, but he fell at last.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 3

#### My final diplomatic letters

I received a letter from the President of the Council, in final settlement, which proved that, in my great simplicity, I had failed to appropriate anything of that which renders a man respectable and respected:

*‘Paris, 16th June 1824.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I hastened to submit to His Majesty the order by means of which he might consider you wholly and completely discharged of the sums you received from the Royal treasury, for private expenses, during the period of your Ministry.*

*The King has approved all the terms of this order, the original of which I have the honor of enclosing.*

*Accept, Monsieur le Vicomte, etc.’*

My friends and I soon dispatched a volley of correspondence:

*MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND TO MONSIEUR DE TALARU*

*‘Paris, the 9th of June 1824.*

*‘I am no longer a Minister, my dear friend; they say you will be. When I obtained the Madrid embassy for you, I said to several people, who still remember: ‘I have just named my successor.’ I wish to have been a prophet. Monsieur de Villèle holds the portfolio ad interim.*

*CHATEAUBRIAND’*

*MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND TO MONSIEUR DE RAYNEVAL*

*‘Paris, the 16th of June 1824.*

*‘I am finished, dear Sir; I hope you will still be in place for some time. I have made sure you shall have no grounds to complain of me.*

*It is possible that I will retire to Neuchâtel, in Switzerland; if that happens, please ask His Prussian Majesty in advance for his protection and goodwill; offer my respects to Count von Bernstorff, my friendship to Monsieur Ancillon, and my compliments to all your secretaries. I beg you, dear Sir, to believe in my devotion and my sincere attachment to you.*

*CHATEAUBRIAND’*

*MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND TO MONSIEUR DE CARAMAN*

*‘Paris, the 22nd of June 1824.*



*'Monsieur le Marquis, I have received your letters of the 11th of this month. Someone other than me will advise you of the course you must follow from now on; if it conforms to what you have already heard, it will take you far. It is probable that my dismissal will give great pleasure to Monsieur von Metternich, for a fortnight.*

*Monsieur le Marquis, accept my farewells and fresh assurance of my devotion and my highest consideration.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND TO MONSIEUR HYDE DE NEUVILLE

*'Paris, the 22nd of June 1824.*

*No doubt you have learned of my dismissal. It only remains for me to say how happy I have been with the relations between us, which are not severed. Continue, dear friend, to render service to your country, but do not count too much on recognition for doing so, and don't expect your successes to provide a reason for keeping you in place or for showing you any honor.*

*I wish you dear Sir, all the happiness you deserve, and I embrace you.*

*P.S. I have just received your letter of the 5th of this month, in which you inform me of the arrival of Monsieur de Mérona. Thank you for your firm friendship; be certain I have found nothing but that in your letters.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE DE SERRE

*'Paris, the 23rd of June 1824.*

*'My dismissal will have proven to you, Monsieur le Comte, my inability to serve you; it only remains for me to express my wish to see you in the situation to which your talents summon you. I am retiring, happy to have contributed to returning France her military and political freedom, and to have introduced the seven-year term into the electoral system; that is not all I would have done; the change in qualifying age is a necessary consequence of it; but the principle is finally established; time will do the rest, if it does not undo it. I dare to flatter myself in believing, Monsieur le Comte, that you have had nothing to complain of in our relationship; and I congratulate myself always on having met a man of your worth in government.*

*Accept, with my farewells, etc.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND TO MONSIEUR DE LA FERRONNAYS

*'Paris, the 16th of June 1824.*

*'If by any chance you are still in St Petersburg, Monsieur le Comte, I would not wish to end our correspondence without expressing all the esteem and friendship you have aroused in me: be well; be happier than me, and believe that you may see me again through all life's circumstances. I am writing a note to the Emperor.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

The reply to this parting note arrived in early August. Monsieur de La Ferronnays had agreed to function as Ambassador during my Ministry; later I became in turn an Ambassador during Monsieur de La Ferronnay's Ministry: neither thought the other had been risen or fallen. Compatriots and friends, we rendered each other mutual justice. Monsieur de La Ferronnays had endured the harshest trials without complaint; he remained loyal despite his sufferings and his noble poverty. After my fall, he acted on my behalf in St Petersburg as I would have acted on his: an honest man is always sure of being understood by an honest man. I am happy to produce this moving testimonial of Monsieur de La Ferronnays' courage, loyalty and nobility of soul. At the moment when I received this letter, it was a compensation for me, far beyond the capricious and banal favors of fortune. Here alone, and for the first time, I feel I ought to violate the honorable privacy that friendship urges.

MONSIEUR DE LA FERRONAYS TO MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND

*'St Petersburg, the 4th of July 1824.*

*The Russian courier, who arrived the day before yesterday, handed me your little note of the 16th; to me it is one of the most precious of all those I have had the pleasure of receiving from you; I will retain it as if it were a title I had been honored with, and I have the firm expectation and intimate conviction that I will soon present it to you in less mournful circumstances. I will follow, Monsieur le Vicomte, the example you have shown me, and not allow myself to reflect on the event which has so brusquely and so unexpectedly interrupted the relations which the service established between us; yet the nature of those relations, the confidence with which you honored me, and the gravest of considerations, since they are not exclusively personal, will provide sufficient explanation of the motives and the whole extent of my regrets. What has happened still remains entirely inexplicable to me; I have no knowledge of the cause, but I see the effects of it; they were so easy, so logical, to foresee, that I am astonished so little concern is shown as to defy them. Yet I know too well the nobility of feeling that animates you, and the purity of your patriotism, to doubt that you will approve the course which I felt I should pursue in this situation; it was dictated by duty, by my love of country, and was even in the interests of your own glory; and you are too much of a Frenchman to accept the protection and support of strangers, in the circumstances in which you find yourself. You have gained the trust and esteem of Europe forever; but it is France you serve, it is her alone to whom you belong; she may prove unjust but neither you nor your true friends will ever allow your cause to be rendered less fine or pure by its defence being entrusted to foreign spokesmen. I have therefore suppressed all private feelings and considerations in favor of the common interest; I have avoided steps whose first effect would be to create dangerous division among us, and strike at the dignity of the throne. It is the last service I rendered here before my departure; you alone, Monsieur le Vicomte, have knowledge of it; confidence is due you, and I know the nobility of your character too well to doubt that you will keep my secret, and will find that my conduct, in the circumstances, conforms to the sentiments you have the right to demand of those you honor with your esteem and friendship.*

*Adieu, Monsieur le Vicomte: if the relationship I have had the happiness to enjoy with you has been able to provide you with a true idea of my character, you should know that changes of circumstance cannot influence my sentiments, and you will never doubt the attachment and devotion of one who, in the present circumstances, esteems himself the most fortunate of men in being considered one of your friends.*

*LA FERRONNAYS*

*Messieurs de Fontenay and de Pontcarré feel most strongly the value of the memory of them which you choose to retain: witnesses, like me, to the increase in respect which France has gained since your entry into government, it is obvious that they share my sentiments and regrets.'*

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 4

#### Neuchâtel in Switzerland

I began the battles of my newly-established opposition immediately after my downfall; but they were interrupted by the death of Louis XVIII, and were not actively resumed until after Charles X's coronation. In July, I re-joined Madame de Chateaubriand at Neuchâtel, she having gone there to await me. She had rented a cottage by the lake-shore. Before us, the Alpine chain stretched north and south to a great distance: we had our backs to the Jura, whose slopes black with fir-trees rose steeply above our heads. The lake was deserted; a wooden gallery served me for exercise. I recalled Milord Maréchal. When I climbed to the heights of the Jura, I could see Lake Biel to whose waves and breezes Jean-Jacques Rousseau owed one of his happiest inspirations. Madame de Chateaubriand was off to visit Fribourg and a country-house which we had been told was charming, but which she found chilly, even though it was nicknamed *Little Provence*. A thin black cat, half-wild, which caught little fish by dipping its paw into a large bucket filled with lake-water, was my only distraction. A tranquil old woman, who was always knitting, prepared our banquets on an earthenware stove, without moving from her chair. I had not lost the habit of eating like a field-mouse.

Neuchâtel has known moments of importance; it belonged to the Duchesse de Nemours; Jean-Jacques Rousseau walked, dressed as an Armenian, on its heights, and Madame de Charrière, so delicately observed by Monsieur de Saint-Beuve, described its society in her *Lettres neuchâtelaises*: though *Juliane*, *Mademoiselle de La Prise*, and *Henri Meyer*, were not there; I only saw poor Fauche-Borel, out of the *émigré* past: he later threw himself from a window. Monsieur Pourtalès' tidy gardens charmed me no more than did a rock from England erected by human hand in a neighboring vineyard facing the Jura. Berthier, the last Prince of Neuchâtel, thanks to Bonaparte, was forgotten despite his *little Simplon* in the Val de Travers, and even though he shattered his skull in the same manner as Fauche-Borel.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 5

#### The death of Louis XVIII – The coronation of Charles X

The King's illness recalled me to Paris. The King died on the 16th of September, barely four months after my dismissal. My pamphlet, entitled '*The King is dead: long live the King!*' in which I hailed the new sovereign, did for Charles X what my pamphlet '*Of Bonaparte and the Bourbons*' had done for Louis XVIII. I went to seek Madame de Chateaubriand at Neuchâtel, and we returned to Paris, to lodge in the Rue du Regard. Charles X gained popularity at the start of his reign by abolishing censorship; his coronation took place in the spring of 1825. '*Already the bees began to buzz, the birds to sing, the lambs to leap.*'

I found the following notes, written at Rheims, among my papers:

*'Rheims, the 26th of May 1825.*

*'The King arrives the day after tomorrow: his coronation will be on Sunday the 29th; I will see a crown placed on his head, a sight no one could have conceived of when I raised my voice in 1814. I helped to open the gates of France for him; I gave him champions, by conducting the Spanish War successfully; I ensured the Charter was adopted, and I knew how to raise an army, the two things with which the King could rule at home and abroad: what role was reserved for me at the coronation: that of an outcast. I have received a decoration, one indiscriminately awarded to a whole crowd of people, not even handed out by Charles X. The people I served, and won places for, have turned their backs on me. The King will take his hands in mine; he will see me at his feet without being moved, when I take the oath, as he has watched me recommence my woes without interest. Does it bother me? No. Delivered from any obligation to visit the Tuileries, freedom compensates me for everything.'*

*'I write this page of my Memoirs in a room where I am forgotten amidst the noise. This morning I visited Saint-Rémi and the Cathedral decorated with hangings. I only have a clear idea of this last building because of the scenery in Schiller's Jeanne d'Arc, which was performed before me in Berlin: theatrical design allowed me to see on the banks of the Spree what theatrical design will hide from me on the banks of the Vesle: for the rest, I entertain myself among the ancient dynasties, from Clovis and his Franks, and his pigeon descending from heaven, to Charles VII with Joan of Arc at his side.*

*"I come from my own country  
no higher than a boot, yet,  
it's with a la, with a si,  
And with my marmot.*

*One little sou, Monsieur, if you would!"*

*That was what a little Savoyard, who had just arrived in Rheims, sang to me on my way back. "And what are you doing here?" I asked him. – "I've come for the Coronation, Monsieur. – With your marmot? – Yes, Monsieur, with a la, with a si, and with my marmot," he replied, dancing and tumbling. – "Well I too, my lad!"*

That was not true: I had come to the Coronation without a marmot, and a marmot is a great resource: in my coffers I only had an old daydream and I would scarcely be given a little *sou* by a passer-by to see that climb a stick.'

*'Louis XVII and Louis XVIII had no coronation; that of Charles X followed in succession that of Louis XVI. Charles X was present at his brother's coronation; he represented the Duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror. Under what happy auspices Louis XVI mounted the throne! How popular he was, succeeding Louis XV! And yet, what became of him? The actual Coronation will not be a Coronation, but merely the representation of a Coronation: we will behold Marshal Moncey, who acted at Napoleon's Coronation: that Marshal, who once celebrated the death of the tyrant Louis XVI among his troops, we will see brandishing the Royal sword at Rheims, in his role as Count of Flanders or Duke of Aquitaine. Who is fooled by such antics? I would have wished for an absence of pomp, at this time: the King on horseback, the church bare, adorned only with its ancient vaults and its ancient tombs; the two Chambers present, the oath of loyalty to the Charter pronounced on the Gospel in a loud voice. This is the rebirth of the monarchy; it could be reborn in freedom and religion: unfortunately there is little love of freedom; but still, they might at least have a taste for glory!*

*'Ah! Deep in their dusty tombs, the noble shades  
Of all those valiant kings, what will they say?  
What will Pharamond say, or Clodion or Clovis,  
Our Pepins, our Martels, our Charles, and Louis,  
Who, in the heat of war, with their own blood  
Won, for their scions, this land so fair and good?'*

*'In the end, has not the new style of coronation, when the Pope anointed a man as great as the founder of the second dynasty, destroyed, by transmuting the head anointed, the effect of our ancient and historic ceremony? The nation has been led to think that a pious rite sets someone on the throne, and renders it a matter of indifference which brow is chosen to receive the sacred oil. The extras at Notre-Dame de Paris, corresponding to those in the cathedral at Rheims, will be no more than obligatory players on a vulgar stage: the advantage remains with Napoleon who passes on his attendants to Charles X. The figure of the Emperor dominates everything these days. It looms behind events and ideas: the leaves of these inferior times in which we live wither beneath the gaze of his eagles.'*

*'Rheims, Saturday, the eve of the Coronation.*

*I watched the King's entry; I saw the gilded coaches of a monarch who had scarcely a horse to ride not long ago; I watched those carriages, filled with courtiers who found themselves unable to defend their master, roll by. That gang were off to the Cathedral to chant the Te Deum, while I went to view a Roman ruin and walk alone in a wood of elms known as the Wood of Love. I heard far off the jubilation of the bells, and I gazed at the towers of the Cathedral, age-old witnesses of that ceremony which is always the same and yet varies with history, the age, ideas, manners, practices and customs. The monarchy perished, and for some years the Cathedral was used as a stable. Does Charles X, seeing it today, remember that he saw Louis XVI anointed in the same place where he is to be anointed in his turn? Does he think that a Coronation can provide a defence against misfortune? There is no longer a hand virtuous enough to heal the King's evil, no longer a holy phial so powerful as to render kings inviolable.'*

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 6

#### Reception of the Knights of the Orders

I wrote what you have just read hurriedly on the half-empty pages of a pamphlet entitled: *'The Coronation; by Barnage of Rheims, lawyer'* and on a printed letter of the Grand Referendary, Monsieur de Sémonville, reading: *'The Grand Referendary has the honor to inform his Lordship, Monsieur le Vicomte de Chateaubriand, that places are reserved in the chancel of Rheims Cathedral for such of the Peers who wish to be present the day after the Coronation of His Majesty at the reception ceremony for the Grand Master of the Orders of the Holy Ghost and of St Michael and the reception for Messieurs the Knights and Commanders.'*

Charles X, however, intended to make his peace with me. The Archbishop of Paris spoke to him at Rheims about those in opposition: the King said: *'Those who want nothing to do with me, I ignore.'* The Archbishop replied: *'But Sire, Monsieur de Chateaubriand? – Oh, him I regret!'* The Archbishop asked the King if he could tell me so: the King hesitated, took two or three turns round the room and replied: *'Well, yes, tell him!'* and the Archbishop forgot to say anything to me.

At the ceremony for the Knights of the Orders, I found myself kneeling at the King's feet, just as Monsieur de Villèle was taking the oath. I exchanged a few polite words with my companion in knighthood, regarding a feather which had come loose from my hat. We left the Sovereign's presence and all was done. The King, having had some difficulty in removing his gloves to take my hands in his, said to me with a laugh: *'A gloved cat catches no mice.'* It was thought that he had spoken to me at length, and a rumor spread of my return to favor. It is probable that Charles X, thinking that the Archbishop had told me of his goodwill, expected a word of gratitude from me and was offended by my silence.

Thus I was present at the last Coronation of the successors of Clovis; I had initiated it by the pages where I urged the Coronation, and described it in my pamphlet *'Le Roi est mort: vive le Roi!'* Not that I had the slightest belief in the ceremony; but since the Legitimacy lacked all credibility, I had to use every argument to support it, however worthless. I recalled Adalbéron's pronouncement: *'The Coronation of a king of France is a public matter, not a private affair: publica sunt haec negotia, non privata'*; I quoted the admirable prayer reserved for the Coronation: *'O God, who by Thy virtues counsel Thy peoples, grant to this Thy servant the spirit of Thy wisdom! May these days see equity and justice born for all: succor for friends, hindrance for enemies, for the afflicted consolation, for the young correction, for the rich instruction, for the needy pity, for the pilgrim hospitality, for the poorer subject peace and protection in his homeland! Let him (the King) learn self-control, and to govern all men moderately according to their condition, so that, O Lord, he may set all people an example pleasing to Thee!'*

Before reproducing this prayer, recorded by Du Tillet, in my pamphlet, *'Le Roi est mort: vive le Roi!'* I exclaimed: *'Let us humbly beseech Charles X to imitate his ancestors: thirty-two sovereigns of the third dynasty have received the Royal unction.'*

All my duties being fulfilled, I left Rheims and could say like Joan of Arc: *'My mission is over.'*

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 7

I gather my former adversaries around me – My public changes

Paris put an end to its recent celebrations: the age of indulgence, reconciliation, and favor was past: sad reality alone was left us.

Since, in 1820, censorship had finished off the Conservateur, I lost no time recommencing, seven years afterwards, the same polemic in another form and using another printer. The men who fought alongside me on the Conservateur demanded, like me, freedom of thought and the pen: they were in opposition as I was, in disgrace like me, and they called themselves my friends. Achieving power in 1820, by my efforts even more than their own, they turned against the freedom of the press: from the persecuted, they became the persecutors; they ceased to be or to call themselves my friends; they maintained that Press license only began on the 6th of June 1824, the day of my dismissal from government; their memories were short: if they had re-read the opinions they had stated, the articles they had written against another government, and in favor of the freedom of the Press, they would have been forced to admit that in 1818 and 1819 they were at least the seconds-in-command of license.

On the other side, my former adversaries gathered round me. I tried to link the partisans of freedom to legitimate Royalty, with more success than I had rallied the servants of throne and altar to the Charter. My public had altered. I was obliged to warn the Government of the dangers of absolutism, after having protected it from popular preaching. Accustomed to show my readers respect, I did not deliver them a line that I had not written with all the care of which I was capable: so many of those little works of a day cost me more pain, in proportion, than the longest works from my pen. My life was incredibly busy. Honor and my country called me onto the field of battle. I had arrived at an age when a man needs peace and quiet; but if I had judged my years by the ever-increasing hatred that oppression and baseness aroused in me I would have thought myself young again.

I gathered around me a group of writers to give unity to my struggles. Among them were Peers, Deputies, Magistrates, and young authors starting out on their careers. There flocked to me Messieurs Montalivet, Salvandy, Duvergier de Hauranne, and plenty of others who were my pupils and who churn out today, as new, reflections on representative monarchy, things which I taught them, and appear throughout my works. Monsieur de Montalivet became Interior Minister and a favorite of Louis-Philippe; those who enjoy following the vagaries of destiny will find this letter quite interesting:

*‘Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I have the honor to send you a statement of the errors I have found in the table of judgements of the Royal Court which has been conveyed to you. I have verified them further, and I think I can attest to the correctness of the attached list.*

*Deign to accept, my dear Vicomte, the homage of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,*

*Your very devoted colleague and sincere admirer,*



*MONTALIVET*

That did not prevent my *devoted colleague and sincere admirer*, Monsieur le Comte de Monalivet, so great a partisan in his time of the freedom of the Press, having me, as a protagonist of that freedom, committed to Monsieur Gisquet's gaol.

A summary of my fresh polemics which lasted five years, but which finished by my triumphing, will convey the power of ideas that opposed events, even those backed by force. I was dismissed on the 6th of June 1824; on the 21st I entered the arena, I remained there until the 18th of December 1826: I entered alone, naked and despoiled, and I emerged victorious. It is history I write here, in making an extract of the arguments I employed.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 8

An extract from my polemic after my fall

*‘We have had the courage and sense of honor to carry out a risky war in the presence of a free Press, and it is the first occasion that this noble spectacle has been demonstrated to the monarchy. We have quickly repented of our trust. We have braved the newspapers when they could only have been harmful to the success of our soldiers and officers; it is necessary to subjugate them when they dare to speak of clerks and ministers.*

*If those who administer the State appear to ignore the spirit of France completely in serious matters they are no less strangers to those matters of grace and ornament which mingle, to adorn it, with the life of civilized nations.*

*The riches which the Legitimacy expends on the arts exceed the aid that the usurper’s government accorded them; but how are they allocated? Sworn to omission by nature and taste, the dispensers of these riches seem to possess an antipathy for the famous; their obscurity is so invincible, that in approaching the illustrious they make them fade; one might say that they pour money over the arts in order to extinguish them, as over our freedom in order to stifle it.*

*Yet if the rack on which they place France to her discomfort resembles those detailed models which one examines with a magnifying glass in amateur collections, the minuteness of that inspection might interest for a moment but no more: it is a petty thing badly executed.’*

*‘We have said that the system followed by the administration at present harms the French spirit: we will try to prove that it equally misunderstands the nature of our institutions.*

*Monarchy has been re-established in France without effort, because it is dominant in our history, because the Crown is borne by a family which almost witnessed the birth of our nation, which formed it, civilized it, gave it all its liberties, rendered it immortal; but time has reduced that monarchy to something mundane. The age of myth in politics is over; we can no longer have a government of worship, religion and mystery: everyone knows their rights; nothing is possible if it ignores the bounds of reason; and including the granting of favors, the last illusion of absolute monarchy, everything now is weighed, everything is assessed.*

*Let us not deceive ourselves; a new era has begun for all nations; will it be a happy one? Providence alone knows. As for us, it is our task to prepare ourselves for future events. Let us not imagine that we can return to the past: there is no salvation for us except in the Charter.*

*Constitutional monarchy was not born among us systematically in writing, even though there is a printed Code; it is the child of time and event, like the ancient monarchy of our forefathers.*

*Why could freedom not survive within the edifice constructed by despotism, where it has left its traces? Victory, still adorned with the tricolor so to speak, has taken refuge in the Duc d’Angoulême’s tent; the Legitimacy occupies the Louvre, even though one can still see the eagles there.*

*In a Constitutional monarchy, public freedoms are respected; they are considered safeguards of the monarch, the people and the law.*

*We mean something different by Representative government. These people form a company (one might even say two rival companies, since competition is essential) to bribe newspapers with money. They do not hesitate to take scandalous action against proprietors who do not wish to sell themselves; they would prefer to oblige them to endure erroneous court arrest. Men of honor, repugnant to the calling, are enlisted, to support a Royalist government, libelers who have pursued the Royal family with their calumnies. They recruit all who served in the former police force and the Imperial ante-chambers; as among our neighbors, who, when they want to recruit sailors, press the taverns and suspect places. These galley-slaves of free writers have taken to the waves, in five or six bought newspapers, and yet what they say is called public opinion by Ministers.'*

That is a much abridged, but perhaps still too lengthy, specimen of my polemic in my pamphlets and in the *Journal des Débats*: in it are found all the principles that people proclaim today.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 9

I refuse the pension the Minister of State wishes to pay me – The Greek Committee – Monsieur Molé's note – A letter from Canaris to his son – Madame Récamier sends me an extract from another letter – My complete works

When they drove me from government, they did not give me my pension as a Minister of State; and I did not claim it; but Monsieur de Villèle, following a remark of the King's, decided to dispatch a fresh pension certificate to me via Monsieur de Peyronnet. I rejected it. Either I had the right to my former pension, or I did not: in the former case, I did not require a new certificate; in the latter, I did not wish to owe my pension to the President of the Council.

The Hellenes shook of their yoke: a Greek committee was formed in Paris of which I made one. The committee met at Monsieur Ternaux's, in the Place des Victories. The members of the society would arrive in succession at the debating chamber. General Sebastiani would declare, as soon as he was seated, that it was a *shocking business*; he would elaborate endlessly: which displeased our energetic president Monsieur Ternaux, who was happy to manufacture shawls for Aspasia, but would not waste his time on her. Monsieur Fabvier's speeches made the committee suffer; he grumbled at us a great deal; he held us responsible for what did not take place according to his views, it was we who failed to win the battle at Marathon. I devoted myself to Greek independence: it seemed to me like fulfilling a filial duty towards one's mother. I wrote a *Note on Greece*; I addressed myself to the successors of the Russian Emperor, as I had addressed myself to the Emperor in person at Verona. The *Note* was printed and then reprinted at the front of the *Itinerary*.

I worked for the same cause in the Chamber of Peers, in order to stir the body politic into life. This note of Monsieur de Molé's reveals the obstacles I encountered and the round-about methods I was forced to employ:

*'You will find us all ready tomorrow, at the opening session, to follow your lead. I am going to write to Lainé if I cannot find him. It is only necessary for him to allow for the phrasing concerning the Greeks; but be careful they do not counter your move by restricting any amendments and, rulebook in hand, refuse you. They may suggest lodging your proposal with the bureau: you could do that as well, after saying all you need to say. Pasquier happens to be quite unwell, and I fear he will not be on his feet tomorrow. As for a vote, we will have one. What will do better still is the arrangement you have made with your booksellers. It is a fine thing to restore by means of it all that the injustice and ingratitude of men has taken from us.*

*Yours for life,*

*MOLE'*

Greece was freed of the Islamic yoke; but, instead of a federal republic, as I desired, a Bavarian monarchy was established in Athens. Now, since Kings are lacking in memories, I who had done a little service to the Argives' cause, heard tell of them in future only in Homer. Greece, once free, did not say: *'Thank you.'* She ignored my name as much as, and more than, in the days when I wept over her ruins while crossing her wastes.

Hellas, before royalty, had been more grateful. Among various children the Committee educated was young Canaris: his father, distinguished as a naval commander by his efforts at Mycalé, wrote him a note which the child translated into French on a blank sheet at the end of the letter. The boy sent me the dual text; I have kept it as a tribute to the Greek Committee:

*‘My dear boy,*

*Not every Greek has the good fortune you have had: that of being selected by the benevolent Committee which interests itself in us in order to teach men their duties. I begot you; but these commendable gentlemen will give you an education which will truly make a man of you. Be dutiful as regards the counsels of your new fathers, if you would console the last years of one who gave you to the light. Be well.*

*Your father,*

C. CANARIS.

Napflion (Napoli de Romanie), the 5th of September 1825.’

Republican Greece gave witness to private regrets when I left the government. Madame Récamier wrote to me from Naples on the 29th of October 1824:

*‘I have received a letter from Greece which made a long detour before reaching me. In it I found several lines regarding you which I would like you to know of; these are they:*

*“The decree of the 6th of June has arrived, and has had a strong effect on our leaders. Their deepest hopes being vested in France’s generosity, they are asking themselves anxiously what the dismissal of a man whose character presaged future support for them might mean.”*

*If I am not wrong this homage will please you. I enclose the letter: its first page only concerns me.’*

You will soon read about Madame Récamier’s life: you may guess how sweet it was to me to receive a memory of the land of *the Muses* from a woman who adorns them.

As for the note from Monsieur Molé given above, it makes allusion to the contract I had agreed regarding the publication of my *Complete Works*. That arrangement should, indeed, have assured me a life of ease; it nevertheless turned sour, even though it has worked out well for the publishers to whom Monsieur Ladvocat, after his bankruptcy, left my Works. *Vis à vis* Plutus or Pluto (the mythologists confuse the two) I am like Alcestis, *I am forever seeing the fatal barque*; like William Pitt, and that is my excuse, I am a leaking basket; but I did not myself make the hole in the basket.

At the end of the general preface to my *Works* (1826, Volume I) I address France thus:

*‘O France, my dear country, my first love, one of your sons, at the end of his career, displays beneath your gaze any title he might have to your kindness. If he can do no more for you, you can do all for him, by declaring that his attachment to your religion, your king, and your freedom, has been acceptable to you. Famous and beloved land, I have only desired glory in order to add to yours.’*



## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 10

#### A trip to Lausanne

Madame de Chateaubriand, being ill, took a trip to the south of France, and feeling no better, returned to Lyons, where Doctor Prunelle condemned her condition. I went to meet her; I took her to Lausanne, where she gave the lie to Monsieur Prunelle. I stayed at Lausanne alternately with Monsieur de Sivry and Madame de Cottens, an affectionate, spiritual but unfortunate woman. I met Madame de Montolieu; she lived in retirement on a lofty hillside; she pined away amongst romantic illusions, like Madame de Genlis, her contemporary. Gibbon had composed his *History of the Roman Empire* at my very door: 'It was among the ruins of the Capitol', he wrote, in Lausanne, on the 27th of June 1787 'that I first conceived the idea of a work which has amused and exercised near twenty years of my life.' Madame de Staël had appeared in Lausanne with Madame Récamier. All the *émigrés*, a whole past world, stayed for a while in that sad and smiling city, a kind of imitation Granada. Madame de Duras has evoked the memory in her *Memoirs* and this letter told me of a fresh loss to which I was condemned:

*'Bex, 13th of July 1826.*

*'It is finished, Monsieur, your friend exists no more. She has rendered her soul to God, painlessly, this morning at a quarter to eleven. She was still out in her carriage yesterday evening. Nothing suggested so immediate a death; what can I say, we did not think her illness would end thus. Monsieur de Custine, whose grief does not allow him to write to you himself, was even out in the mountains round Bex yesterday morning, to arrange a daily delivery of mountain milk for the dear invalid.*

*I am too oppressed by grief myself to enter into lengthy details. We are preparing to return to France with the precious remains of that best of mothers and friends. Enguerrand will lie between his two mothers.*

*We will pass through Lausanne, where Monsieur de Custine will seek you out as soon as we arrive.*

*Accept, Monsieur, the assurance of respectful attachment with which I am, etc.'*

BERSTOECHER'

See my earlier and later comments, to discover what I have had the pleasure and misfortune to recall regarding my memories of Madame de Custine.

The *Letters written from Lausanne*, a work of Madame de Charrière, gives a good description of the scenery that met my eyes each day, and the feelings of grandeur it inspired: 'I take my rest in solitude,' says Cécile's mother, 'by an open window which overlooks the lake. I thank you, mountains, snow, sunlight, for all the pleasure you give me. I thank You, Creator of all I see, for having made these things so delightful to see. Fine and glorious beauties of nature! My eyes admire you every day, and every day you register yourself within my heart.'

In Lausanne, I began my *Notes* on the first work I wrote, the *Essai sur les Révolutions anciennes et modernes*. From my windows I could see the rocks of Meillerie:

*‘Rousseau,’ I wrote in one of these Notes, ‘only really goes beyond other authors of his age in sixty or so letters of La Nouvelle Héloïse, in a few pages of his Rêveries and his Confessions. There, revealing the true nature of his talent, he arrives at a passionate eloquence before him unknown. Voltaire and Montesquieu proved stylistic models for writers of the century of Louis XIV; Rousseau, and to some extent Buffon, in another genre, created a language unknown to that great century.’*



## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 11

#### Return to Paris – The Jesuits – A Letter from Monsieur de Montlosier and my reply

On returning to Paris, my life was occupied by my household on the Rue d'Enfer, my renewed struggles in the Chamber of Peers and my pamphlets opposing various proposed laws in conflict with public freedom; by my speeches and my writings in support of the Greeks, and my efforts towards my *Complete Works*. The Emperor of Russia had died, and with him the only Royal friendship that remained to me. The Duc de Montmorency had become tutor to the Duc de Bordeaux. He did not enjoy that weighty honor long: he died on Good Friday 1826, in the Church of Saint-Thomas-Aquinas, at the hour when Jesus died on the cross; he went to God with Christ's last sigh.

Battle was commenced against the Jesuits; banal and tiresome declamations were made against that illustrious Order, which, it must be admitted, concealed something disturbing within it, for a mysterious cloud of darkness covered all the affairs of the Jesuits.

Regarding the Jesuits, I received this letter from Monsieur de Montlosier, and sent him the reply which you will find following the letter.

*Ne derelinquas amicum antiquam, Novus enim non erit similis illi. (Ecclesiastes IX, 10)*

*(Do not forsake an old friend, since the new cannot equal him)*

*'My dear friend, those words are not only very ancient, they are not only very wise; for Christians, they are sacred. I invoke in you all the authority they may possess. Reconciliation is never necessary between old friends, or between good citizens. To close ranks, to tighten the bond between us, by emulation to strengthen all our vows, increase all our efforts, stimulate all our feelings, is a duty demanded by the eminently deplorable state of king and country. In addressing these words to you, I do not ignore the fact that they will be received by a heart torn by ingratitude and injustice; and yet I still address them to you with confidence, certain as I am that there is light beyond the darkness. On this delicate issue, my dear friend, I do not know whether you are pleased with me; but, in the midst of your tribulations, if I have chanced to hear you accused, I have not troubled to defend you: I have not even listened. I said to myself: and if that should be so? I am not sure that Alcibiades was not showing a little too much anger when he threw a rhetorician out of his own house for not possessing the works of Homer. I am not sure that Hannibal was not showing a little too much violence when he ejected a senator, who spoke against his opinion, from his headquarters. If I were to confess my thoughts on the subject of Achilles, perhaps I would not approve his exiling himself from the Greek army because of some young girl who was stolen from him. After that, it is enough to pronounce the names Alcibiades, Hannibal, Achilles, for all disagreement to be over: it is the same today with the iracundus and inexorabilis, the irascible and inexorable, Chateaubriand. Once his name is pronounced, all is said. At that name, when I say to myself: he is complaining, I feel my tenderness stirred; when I say to myself: France needs him, I feel myself filled with respect. Yes, my friend, France needs you. She shall need you still more; through you she has recovered her love of her religion and her ancestors: that benefit must be maintained; and for that, she must be dragged away from the errors of her priests, to drag those priests themselves away from the fatal slope on which they are standing.*

*My dear friend, you and I have struggled for many years. It is left to us to preserve the King and the State from the preponderance of ecclesiastics who call themselves religious. In former times, the evil and its roots were within us; we could circumvent and master it. Today the branches which cover us within have their roots outside us. The private doctrines of the race of Louis XVI and Charles I have given way to the tainted doctrines of Henri IV and Henri III. Neither you nor I surely can support this state of things; it is in order to unite with you, to receive your approbation which will encourage me, and offer you like a soldier my loyalty and arms, that I write to you.*

*It is with these sentiments of admiration for you and a true devotion to you that I tenderly and respectfully implore you.*

Comte de MONTLOSIER.

Randanne, the 28th of November 1825.'

TO MONSIEUR DE MONTLOSIER

'Paris, this 3rd of December 1825.

*Your letter, my dear old friend, is very serious, and yet it made me smile in regard to myself. Alcibiades, Hannibal, Achilles! You cannot be serious regarding all that. As for the son of Peleus' young girl, if that refers to my portfolio, I protest that I barely loved the faithless one three days, and have not experienced a quarter of an hour's regret. My resentment: that is another matter. Monsieur de Villèle, whom I sincerely and cordially like, has not only foregone the duties of friendship, the public signs of attachment I showed him, the sacrifices I made for him, but even the simplest of courtesies.*

*The King no longer requires my services, nothing then is more natural than to dismiss me from his Council; but the manner of it means everything to a gentleman, and as I have not stolen the King's clock from his mantelpiece, I ought not to be hunted down as if I had. I merely made war in Spain and kept the peace in Europe during a dangerous period; through this alone I created an army for the Legitimacy, and I have been ejected from my place, by all the Restoration Ministers, without any mark of recognition from the Crown, as if I had betrayed Prince and country. Monsieur de Villèle thinks I will accept such treatment: he is mistaken. I have shown my sincerity: I will be an irreconcilable enemy. I am born under a cloud: the wounds I have received never close.*

*But this is all about me: let us speak of something more important. I am afraid I do not agree with you on weighty matters, and I am sorry for it! I desire the Charter, the whole Charter, the freedom of the public to its whole extent. Do you wish that?*

*I desire religion as you do; I hate the congregation and these associations of hypocrites who make spies of my servants, and who only seek power at the altar. But I believe that the clergy, once rid of these parasitic plants, can easily form part of a constitutional regime, and even become the prop for our new institutions. Do you not seek too strongly to sow division among the political order? Here I give you a proof of my extreme impartiality. The clergy, who, I hate to say it, owe me so much, do not like me, and have never defended me, nor rendered me any service. Does it matter? It is a question of being just, and seeing what is fitting for religion and the monarchy.*

*My dear friend, I do not doubt your courage; you will do, I am convinced, everything which seems right to you, and your talents guarantee you victory. I await your future communications, and I embrace with all my heart my loyal companion in exile.*

*CHATEAUBRIAND'*

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 12

#### More of my polemics

I resumed my polemics. Every day I skirmished, and fought battles in the vanguard, with the soldiers of the Ministerial staff; they did not always use their swords effectively. In the first two centuries of Rome, they punished horsemen who held back from the charge, because they were too heavy, or not brave enough, condemning them to suffer heavy losses: I tasked myself with their punishment.

*‘The universe around us is changing,’ I said: ‘new nations are appearing on the world-scene; ancient nations are reviving in the midst of ruin; astonishing discoveries promise an imminent revolution in the arts of peace and war: religion, politics, ways of life, all take on a new character. Do we take note of this movement? Are we in tune with society? Are we pursuing the trend of the age? Are we ready to hold our place in the transformation or development of civilization? No: the men who lead us are as much strangers to the state of things in Europe as the latest tribes to be discovered in the heart of Africa. What do they understand? The Stock Exchange! And they understand that inadequately. Are we condemned to bear the burden of obscurity, to punish ourselves for having suffered the yoke of glory?’*

The transactions regarding Santo Domingo supplied me with the opportunity to develop several arguments regarding our public rights, which no one had considered.

Reaching the noblest of conclusions and announcing the transformation of the world, I replied to those opponents who cried: *‘What! We may be Republicans some day? Drivel! Who dreams of a Republic these days? etc. etc.’*

*‘Rationally devoted to monarchical order,’ I replied, ‘I consider constitutional monarchy the best form of government possible at this stage of society.*

*But if one wishes to reduce everything to personal interests, if one supposes that I believe I would have anything to fear personally from a Republican State, one is in error.*

*Could it treat me any worse than the monarchy has? Twice or thrice despoiled by it, or by the Empire, which would have done everything for me if I had wished, could it have repudiated me more savagely? I have a horror of slavery; liberty delights my innate love of independence; I prefer that liberty expressed in a monarchical order of things, but I can conceive of it in a popular form. Who has less to fear from the future than I? I possess what no revolution can steal from me: without post, without honor, without wealth, any government not so foolish as to ignore public opinion is obliged to assign me some value. Popular governments especially are composed of individuals, and create common worth from the particular worth of each citizen. I will always be sure of public esteem, because I will never do anything to forgo it, and I may find more justice perhaps among my enemies than among my so-called friends.*

*Thus, all things considered, I would be unafraid of a republic, as I would be without antipathy towards its freedom: I am not a king; I am not waiting to be crowned; it is not my own cause I plead.*

*I have said, under another government, and regarding that government, that one morning they would seat themselves at the window to watch the monarchy go by.*

*I said to the present Ministers: "If you go on as you are, the whole revolution would, in due time, boil down to a new version of the Charter in which one would be content merely to alter one or two words."*

I have highlighted these final phrases to fix the reader's eye on a striking prediction. Now that even opinions are in disorder, and every man utters wrongly and awry whatever passes through his brain, these Republican ideas expressed by a Royalist during the Restoration still seem daring. As regards the future, so-called progressive spirits own the initiative in nothing.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 13

A letter from General Sébastiani

My later articles even stirred up Monsieur de Lafayette who, as sole compliment, sent me a laurel leaf. The effect of my views, to the great surprise of those who had no belief in them, made itself felt, from the booksellers who sent a deputation to me, to the parliamentarians who were initially furthest from my politics. The signature on the letter shown below, as proof of what I claim, caused some astonishment. It is only necessary to note the signature of this letter, and the alteration in the ideas and position of him that wrote it and him that received it: as for the wording, I am Bossuet and Montesquieu, that goes without saying; we authors, that is our daily bread, just as Ministers are always Sully and Colbert.

*‘Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*Permit me to associate myself with the general admiration for you: I have experienced the sentiment for far too long to resist the desire to express it to you.*

*You have united the pride of Bossuet with the profundity of Montesquieu: you have rediscovered their pen and their genius. Your articles provide a great education for Statesmen.*

*In the new style of warfare you have initiated, you recall the powerful hand of he who, in other battles, also filled the world with glory. May your successes be more lasting: they concern our country and mankind.*

*All those who, as I do, embrace the principles of constitutional monarchy, are proud to find in you their noblest interpreter.*

*Accept, Monsieur le Vicomte, fresh assurance of my highest esteem.*

HORACE SÉBASTIANI

*Sunday, the 30th of October.’*

Thus friends, enemies, adversaries fell at my feet at the moment of victory. All the faint-hearts and ambitious types who thought me lost saw me rise again, radiant, from the clouds of dust shrouding the lists: it was my second Spanish War; I triumphed over all the parties at home as I had triumphed abroad over France’s enemies. It had been necessary to pay with my person, just as with my dispatches I had paralyzed and rendered vain the dispatches of Prince von Metternich and Mr. Canning.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 14

The death of General Foy – The *Law of Love and Justice* – A letter from Monsieur Étienne – A letter from Benjamin Constant – I reach the summit of my political importance – An article regarding the King's name-day – Withdrawal of the law on the policing of the press – Paris illuminated – Monsieur Michaud's note.

General Foy and the Deputy, Manuel, had died and stolen from the left-wing opposition its finest orators. Monsieur de Serre and Camille Jordan had also descended into the grave. Even from my chair in the Academy I was obliged to defend the freedom of the Press despite the whimpering pleas of Monsieur de Lally-Tolendal. The law on policing the Press, which was named the *law of love and justice*, owed its rejection principally to my attacks. My *Opinion* on this proposed law is a historically interesting work; I received a number of compliments among which two names are worth noting.

*‘Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I am sensible of the thanks you have chosen to address to me. You term a kindness something which I regarded as a debt, and I was happy to pay it to the eloquent writer. All true friends of letters associate themselves with your triumph and ought to regard themselves as identified with your success. Far off, as near, I will support you with all my power, if it is possible that you have need of efforts as feeble as mine.*

*In an enlightened century like ours, genius is the sole force which can rise above the consequences of disgrace; it belongs to you, Monsieur, to furnish living proof of it to those who rejoice in it, as well as those who have had the misfortune to grieve over it.*

*I have the honor to be, with the most distinguished esteem, yours etc., etc.*

ÉTIENNE

*Paris, this 5th of April 1827.’*

*‘I am rather late, Monsieur, in thanking you for your admirable speech. Trouble with my eyes, work in the Chamber, and furthermore the dreadful sessions of that Chamber, must serve as my excuse. You know moreover how my mind and spirit agree with all you say and are in sympathy with all the good you strive to do our unfortunate country. I am happy to add my feeble efforts to your powerful influence, and the madness of a government which is tormenting France and wishes to degrade it, while disquieting me as to its immediate results, consoles me with the certainty that such a state of things cannot long endure. You will have contributed powerfully to ending it, and if I am worthy one day to have my name placed after yours in the struggle which must be maintained against such foolishness and criminality, I will judge myself well compensated.*

*Accept, Monsieur, the homage of sincere admiration, profound respect and the highest esteem.*

BENJAMIN CONSTANT

*Paris, this 21st of May 1827.’*

It is at the moment of which I speak that I attained the summit of my political importance. With the War in Spain I had mastered Europe; but violent opposition countered me in France: after my fall, I became the avowed master of public opinion at home. Those who accused me of having committed an irreparable fault in taking up the pen once more were forced to acknowledge that I had created an empire more powerful than the first. The youth of France came over completely to my side and have never since quit me. Among several industrial sectors, the workers were at my command, and I could not take a walk in the street without being mobbed. Where did my popularity come from? From the fact that I had understood the true spirit of France. I was left with only a single newspaper to fight with, and I became master of all the others. My bravery sprang from my indifference: as it would have been just the same to me if I had failed, I achieved success without being embarrassed by the possibility of defeat. I was left with my own satisfaction, since what does past popularity matter to anyone today, something rightly effaced from everyone's memory?

The King's name day arrived, and I took the opportunity to express a loyalty which my liberal opinions had not altered. I published this article:

*'A truce with the King!*

*Peace today to the Ministers!*

*Glory, honor, long life and lasting happiness to Charles X! It is St Charles' Day!*

*The history of Charles X should be asked of me especially, as a former companion in exile of our monarch.*

*You, French men and women who have not been forced to leave your country, you moreover who have only welcomed a Frenchman who would relieve you of Imperial despotism and the foreign yoke, inhabitants of a great and fine city, you who have only seen a fortunate Prince: when you pressed round him on the 12th of April 1814, touching the sacred hands with tears of emotion, when you discovered all the grace of youth on a brow ennobled by age and misfortune, as one sees beauty through a veil, you saw only virtue triumphant, and you led the son of kings to the royal seat of his ancestors.*

*But we, we have seen him sleeping on the ground, like us without a refuge, like us proscribed and despoiled. Well, that kindness which charms you was the same then; he bore misfortune as he bears the crown today, without finding the burden too great, with that Christian mildness which tempers the brightness of his influence, as it softens the brightness of his prosperity.*

*Charles X's benefactions are added to all the benefactions his ancestors lavished on us: the name-day of a Christian king is a feast of thanksgiving for the French: allow us then the transports of gratitude with which it should inspire us. Let nothing enter for a moment into our souls that might render our joy less pure! For Heaven's sake...! We would break our truce! Long Live the King!*

My eyes filled with tears while copying out my polemic, and I no longer have the courage to continue with my extracts. Oh! My King! You whom I saw on foreign soil, I saw you again on that same soil where you went to die. When I fought with such ardor to snatch you from the hands which were beginning to destroy you, judge by the words which I have just transcribed whether I was your enemy or rather the most tender and sincere of your servants! Alas! I speak and you can no longer hear me.



The proposal regarding a law to police the Press having been withdrawn, Paris was illuminated. I was struck by this public display, an evil omen for the monarchy: opposition had passed to the people, and the people, by its very nature, transformed opposition into revolution.

Hatred for Monsieur de Villèle began to increase; the Royalists, as in the days of the *Conservateur*, were ranked behind me again as supporters of the constitution: Monsieur Michaud wrote to me:

*‘My honorable Lord,*

*Yesterday I printed the announcement of your work on the censure; but the entry, comprising two lines, has been deleted by the Censors. Monsieur Capefigue will explain to you why we have not set it in black and white.*

*If God does not come to our aid, all is lost; Royalty is like the unhappy Jerusalem in the hands of the Turks, its own children scarcely dare approach it; what a cause we sacrifice ourselves for!*

*MICHAUD’*

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 15

Monsieur Villèle's annoyance – Charles X decides to review the National Guard on the Champ-de-Mars –

I write to him: my letter

The Opposition had finally provoked Monsieur de Villèle's cool temperament into irascibility, and rendered Monsieur de Corbière's destructive spirit despotic. The latter had stripped the Duc de Liancourt of seventeen charitable posts. The Duc de Liancourt was no saint, but in him one knew a benefactor, to whom philanthropy had awarded the title venerable; through the sanctity time gives, former revolutionaries are no longer referred to except with an epithet like Homer's gods: it is always the *respectable* Monsieur *so and so*, always the *inflexible* citizen *so and so*, who, like Achilles, never ate *pap* (a-chylos). On the occasion of a scandal arising during Monsieur de Liancourt's obsequies, Monsieur de Sémonville, in the Chamber of Peers, said: '*Be at ease, Gentlemen, it will not happen again; I will conduct you to the cemetery myself.*'

In April 1827, the King decided to review the National Guard on the Champ-des-Mars. Two days before that fateful review, urged on by my zeal and only asking to lay down my arms, I addressed a letter to Charles X which was passed on to him by Monsieur de Blacas and whose receipt he acknowledged by this note:

*'I have not lost an instant, Monsieur le Vicomte, in passing on to the King the letter which you have had the honor to address to His Majesty; and if he deigns to entrust a reply to me, I will be no less eager in ensuring it reaches you.'*

*Accept, Monsieur le Vicomte, my most sincere compliments.*

BLACAS D'AULPS.

*This 27th April 1827, at one o'clock'*

TO THE KING

*'Sire,*

*Permit a loyal subject, whom troubled times will always find at the foot of the throne, to communicate a few reflections he thinks useful to the glory of the throne, as to the happiness and security of the King.*

*Sire, it is only too true, there is danger to the State: but it is equally certain that this danger will be trivial if the principles of government themselves are not thwarted.*

*A great secret has been revealed, Sire: your Ministers have had the misfortune to inform France that certain people who were said no longer to exist are still alive. Paris, for twice twenty-four hours, has shaken off all authority. The same scenes are being repeated throughout France: the factional elements will not forget this foray.*

*But popular gatherings, so dangerous to absolute monarchies, because they take place in the presence of the monarch himself, are of little note in representative monarchies, because they are not in contact with him except via his Ministers or the law. Between the monarch and his subjects lies a barrier which restrains everyone: the two Chambers and the public institutions. Outside of these movements, the King will always see his authority and his sacred person protected.*

*But, Sire, there is one condition which is indispensable to general security, it concerns the spirit of the institutions: your council's resistance to that spirit renders the popular movements as dangerous in a representative monarchy as in an absolute one.*

*From theory I pass to practice:*

*Your Majesty will appear at the review: you will be received there as you should be; but it is possible that among the shouts of 'Long Live the King!' other shouts will be heard which will make known to you the opinion of the public regarding your Ministers.*

*Furthermore, Sire, it is false that there is at present, as is claimed, a Republican faction; but it is true that there are supporters of illegitimate monarchy: now, the latter are too skillful not to take advantage of the occasion and mingle their cries on the 29th with those of France demanding change.*

*What should the King do? Should he sacrifice his Ministers to popular acclamation? That would be to yield power. Should the King protect his Ministers? Those Ministers will draw down on their august master's head all the unpopularity that they attract. I know that the King would indeed have the courage to accept personal suffering in order to evade danger to the monarchy; but disaster can be avoided by the simplest means; allow me, Sire, to explain to you: it can be achieved by returning to the spirit of our institutions: the Ministers have lost their majority in the Chamber of Peers and in the nation: the natural consequence of that critical situation is for them to resign. How, in the awareness of their duty, could they persist, by staying in power, in compromising the Crown? In offering their resignations at Your Majesty's feet, they would calm everything, and bring it all to an end: it would no longer be the King who yielded it would be the Ministers who deferred according to all the customs and principles of representative government. The King could then resume, with those he chose to retain, at a suitable time: there are two whom opinion singles out, Monsieur le Duc de Doudeauville and Monsieur le Comte de Chabrol.*

*The Review would be free of drawbacks and would be merely an unmixed triumph. The session will bring about tranquility, with blessings showered on my King's head.*

*Sire, the fact of my having dared to write this letter to you shows that I am persuaded of the necessity of taking action, and that an imperative sense of duty has urged me to it. The Ministers are enemies of mine; I am theirs; I forgive them as a Christian; but I will never forgive them as a man: that being the case, however, I would never speak to the King of their resignations unless it was for the good of the monarchy.*

*I am, etc.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 16

The Review – The disbanding of the National Guard – The Elected Chamber is dissolved - The new Chamber – The Refusal to Contest - The fall of Villele's ministry – I contribute to the formation of the new ministry and I accept the Rome embassy

Madame la Dauphine and Madame la Duchesse de Berry were insulted on their way to the Review; the King was generally received well; but one or two companies of the 6th Legion shouted: '*Down with the Ministers! Down with the Jesuits!*' Charles X, offended, replied: '*I have come here to receive homage, not instruction.*' He often had noble words on his lips which did not always survive the heat of action: his mind was daring, his character timid. Charles X, on returning to his palace, said to Marshal Oudinot: '*The total effect has been satisfactory. Though there are a few unruly elements, the bulk of the National Guard is fine: tell them of my satisfaction.*'

Monsieur de Villèle arrived. The Legions on their return passed in front of the Finance Ministry and shouted: '*Down with Villèle!*' The Minister, irritated by all the preceding attacks on him, was no longer proof to a display of cold fury; he proposed to the Council the disbanding of the National Guard. He was supported by Messieurs de Corbière, de Peyronnet, de Damas, and de Clermont-Tonnerre, opposed by Monsieur de Chabrol, the Bishop of Hermopolis, and the Duc de Doudeauville. A decree of the King's announced the disbandment, the most fateful blow inflicted on the monarchy until the final coup of July: if at that time the National Guard had not already been dissolved, the barricades would not have been erected. Monsieur le Duc de Doudeauville gave in his resignation; he wrote the King a letter of justification in which he proclaimed the future events that everyone else foresaw.

The Government began to be afraid; the newspapers doubled their audacious attacks, and a bill of censure, as usual, was proposed against them; there was talk at that time of a ministry under La Bourdonnaye, in which Monsieur de Polignac would have figured. I had incurred the misfortune of naming Monsieur de Polignac as Ambassador to London, in spite of everything Monsieur de Villèle could say: on that occasion he saw further and more clearly than I did. On entering government, I had been urged to do something agreeable to MONSIEUR. The President of the Council had managed to reconcile the two brothers, in anticipation of an imminent change of reign: this would fit the bill for him; I, aware for once in my life of desiring to do something subtle, was foolish. If Monsieur Polignac had not become an Ambassador, he would not have gained control of the Foreign Office.

Monsieur de Villèle, haunted on the one hand by the Royalist liberal opposition, harried on the other by the demands of the Bishops, deceived by consultations with the Prefects, who were themselves deceived, decided to dissolve the elected Chamber, despite the three hundred who remained loyal. The re-establishment of censorship preceded the dissolution. I attacked it more vigorously than ever; the opposition united; the votes in the electoral colleges were all against the government; in Paris the left triumphed; seven colleges nominated Monsieur Royer-Collard, and the two colleges where a Minister, Monsieur de Peyronnet, presented himself, rejected him. Paris was once more illuminated: there were bloody scenes; barricades were erected, and the troops sent to restore order were obliged to open fire: so the last and fateful days loomed. At this juncture, there came news of the battle of Navarino, a success in which I might have claimed a part. The greatest misfortunes of the Restoration were announced by victories; they had difficulty freeing themselves from the heirs of Louis le Grand.

The Chamber of Peers enjoyed public favor by its resistance to oppressive laws; but did not know how to defend itself: it allowed itself to be organized into *blocks* against which I was almost the only one to complain. I predicted that such nominations would vitiate its principles and in the long run cause it to lose its influence with public opinion: was I wrong? Those blocks, with the aim of preventing a majority forming, have not only destroyed the French aristocracy, but they have become the means to be used also against the English aristocracy; the latter will be stifled in a plethora of robes, and will end by losing its hereditary component, as the denatured Peerage of France has.

The new Chamber when it met pronounced its noted '*refusal to contest*': Monsieur de Villèle, reduced to extremities, thought to dismiss some of his colleagues and negotiate with Messieurs Lafitte and Casimir Périer. The two leaders of the left-wing opposition lent an ear: the cat was out of the bag; Monsieur Lafitte dare not take the plunge; the President's hour struck, and the portfolio fell from his hands. I roared, on my withdrawal from government; Monsieur de Villèle was couchant: he had a vague desire to remain in the Chamber of Deputies; a course he ought to have taken, but he had neither a deep enough understanding of representative government, nor sufficiently great an authority over external opinion, to play a like role: the new Ministers demanded his banishment to the Chamber of Peers and he accepted. Consulted on nominations for the Cabinet I invited them to choose Monsieur Casimir Périer and General Sébastiani: my suggestions were ignored.

Monsieur de Chabrol, tasked with assembling the new government, put me at the head of his list; I was erased indignantly by Charles X. Monsieur Portalis, the most miserable character there ever was, a Federalist during the Hundred Days, crawling at the feet of the Legitimacy of whom he spoke as the most ardent Royalist would have blushed to speak, who is now bestowing his banal adulation on Louis-Philippe, received the Justice Ministry. At the War Ministry, Monsieur de Caux replaced Monsieur de Clermont-Tonnerre. Monsieur le Comte Roy, the clever creator of his own immense fortune, was charged with Finance. The Comte de La Ferronnays, my friend, took the Foreign Affairs portfolio. Monsieur de Martignac became Interior Minister; the King was not slow to dislike him. Charles X followed his tastes rather than his principles: though he rejected Monsieur de Martignac because of his penchant for pleasure, he liked Messieurs Corbière and Villèle who did not go to Mass.

Monsieur de Chabrol and the Bishop of Hermopolis remained in the government provisionally. The Bishop, before retiring, came to see me; he asked me if I would take over Education: '*Have Monsieur Royer-Collard*', I told him, '*I have no desire to be a Minister; but if the King absolutely wished me to rejoin his Council, I would only return as Foreign Minister in reparation for the affront I received. Now, I have no pretensions to that portfolio, which is so well placed, in the hands of my noble friend.*'

After the death of Monsieur Mathieu de Montmorency, Monsieur de Rivière had become tutor to the Duc de Bordeaux; he worked from that time at the overthrow of Monsieur de Villèle, since the party devoted to the Court was opposed to the Minister of Finance. Monsieur de Rivière met me in the Rue de Taranne, at Monsieur de Marcellus' residence, to put the same proposition to me, in vain, that the Abbé Frayssinous later put to me. Monsieur de Rivière died, and Monsieur le Baron de Damas succeeded him as tutor to Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux. There was then an ongoing question of the succession of Monsieur de Chabrol and the Bishop of Hermopolis. The Abbé Feutrier, Bishop of Beauvais, was installed as Minister of Religious Affairs, which was separated out from Education, which fell to Monsieur de Vatimesnil. The Minister for the Navy remained to be decided: I was offered the post: I

declined. Monsieur le Comte Roy asked me to indicate someone I felt suitable to be chosen in accord with my views. I designated Monsieur Hyde de Neuville. It was also necessary to find a tutor for the Duc de Bordeaux; Monsieur le Comte Roy spoke to me: Monsieur de Chéverus immediately came to mind. The Minister of Finance hastened to Charles X; the King said: *‘So be it: Hyde to the Navy; but why will Chateaubriand not take part in government himself? As for Monsieur de Chéverus, the choice would be excellent: I am annoyed at not having thought of it; two hours ago, the thing was done: tell Chateaubriand, fine, but Monsieur Tharin has been appointed.’*

Monsieur Roy came to tell me of the success of his negotiations; he added: *‘The King would like you to accept an Embassy; if you wish you can have Rome.’* That word Rome had a magical effect on me; I experienced the temptation the anchorites were exposed to in the desert. Charles X, by accepting the friend I had suggested for the Ministry of the Navy, had made the first advance; I could no longer refuse what was held out to me: I agreed to yet another exile. At least, this time, it was one that pleased me: *Pontificum veneranda sedes, sacrum solium: the venerable seat of the Pontiffs, the sacred throne*. I was seized by a desire to end my days, with a wish to die (with the very self-interest of fame), in the city of funerals, at the moment of my political triumph. I would no longer raise my voice, except like Pliny’s fateful bird, to say *Ave* each morning to the Capitol and the dawn. Perhaps it was helpful for my country to disembarass itself of me: from the weight I felt myself, I guessed the burden I must be for others. Minds possessed of some power which gnaw at themselves and turn on themselves are wearying. Dante placed his tortured souls on a bed of fire in Hell.

Monsieur le Duc de Laval, whom I was to replace at Rome, was appointed Ambassador in Vienna.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 17

#### An examination of the reproach against me

Before changing the subject, I request permission to backtrack and relieve myself of a burden. It is not without pain that I enter into the details of my lengthy differences with Monsieur de Villèle. I have been accused of contributing to the fall of the Legitimacy; it befits me to examine that reproach.

The events which occurred during the Ministry of which I was part possess an importance which makes them part of France's common destiny: there is no French person whose fate has not been touched by the good I may have done, or the ill I suffered. Through strange and inexplicable connections, through private communications which sometimes intertwine the highest and lowest of fortunes, the Bourbons prospered whenever they deigned to listen to me, though I am far from the belief, attested by the poet, that *my eloquence has given alms to Royalty*. Just as one was thinking it necessary to break that reed which grew at the foot of a throne, the crown tilted, and quickly tumbled: sometimes, in pulling at a blade of grass one makes a great ruin collapse.

These incontestable facts one can explain as one will; if they give my political career a value it does not in itself possess, I feel no vanity as a result; I take no malicious joy in those chances which involved my transient name in the events of an age. Whatever the various accidents of my adventurous course have been, or whatever names and events have revealed to me, the landscape's last horizon is always sad and threatening.

‘...*Juga coepta moveri*  
*Silvarum, visaeque canes ululare per umbram:*

...The wooded hills began to move,  
and dogs seemed to howl from the shadows.’

- Virgil

But if the public scene has altered, I must, they say, accuse myself alone: in order to take vengeance for what seemed to me an injury, I caused division everywhere, and that division produced in the final analysis the overthrow of the throne. Let us see.

Monsieur de Villèle has claimed that one could not govern with me or without me. With me, that was his error; without me, at the moment when Monsieur de Villèle spoke the words, he spoke truly, since the most diverse opinions made up my majority.

Monsieur the President of the Council never understood me. I was sincerely attached to him; I had helped him to his first Ministry, as the letter of thanks from Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu and the other letters I have cited prove. I gave in my resignation as Plenipotentiary at Berlin when Monsieur de Villèle was dismissed. He was persuaded on his return to office that I had desired his place. I had no such desire. I am not of that dauntless race, deaf to the voice of devotion and reason. The truth is I have no ambition; it is precisely a motivation I lack, because I have another which dominates me. When I begged Monsieur de Villèle to take an important dispatch to the King, in order to avoid the distress of going to the Palace, and

to leave me free to visit a Gothic chapel in the Rue Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, he might have been reassured about my ambitions if he had been a better judge of my childish candor or the depth of my disdain.

Nothing in public life agreed with me, except perhaps the Foreign Ministry. I was not insensible to the idea the country owed to me, at home liberty, abroad independence. Far from seeking to overthrow Monsieur de Villèle, I told the King: *‘Sire, Monsieur de Villèle is a President full of intelligence; Your Majesty must keep him at the head of your Councils forever.’*

Monsieur de Villele did not perceive that my mind tends towards domination, but it is subject to my character; I take pleasure in obedience, because it takes away the need for willpower. My capital fault is boredom, disgust with everything, perpetual doubt. If I had met with a Prince who, understanding me, had forced me to keep working for him, perhaps he would have got something out of me; but Heaven rarely sees the birth of both the man who wishes to and the man who can. In the final analysis, is it something one would give oneself the trouble of getting out of bed for today? One falls asleep to the sound of kingdoms falling in the night that are swept away each morning from one’s doorstep.

Moreover, after Monsieur de Villele split with me, politics was in disorder; the ultras against whom the wisdom of the President of the Council still struggled overwhelmed him. The opposition he experienced from opinion at home and the trend of opinion abroad made him irritable: hence the Press hobbled, the National Guard disbanded, etc. Should I have allowed the monarchy to perish, in order to acquire a reputation as a moderate, hypocritically lying in wait? I thought, quite sincerely, that I was fulfilling a duty in fighting at the head of the Opposition, too attentive to the danger I saw on one side, not apprised enough of the opposite risk. When Monsieur de Villèle was overthrown, they consulted me on the nomination of one of the other Ministers. If they had accepted, as I proposed, Monsieur Casimir Périer, General Sébastiani, and Monsieur Royer-Collard, things might have been different. I did not wish to accept the Navy Department and I had it given to my friend Hyde de Neuville; equally I refused the Education brief twice; I would never have entered Government again without being in control. I went to Rome to find my other self among the ruins, since there are two distinct beings within me, which have no communication with each other.

Yet I faithfully confess excess of resentment does not justify me according to the word and ancient rule of virtue, though my whole life serves as my excuse.

An officer in the Navarre Regiment, I returned from the forests of America to become a fugitive with the Legitimacy, to fight in its ranks against my own instincts, always without conviction, only as a dutiful soldier. I remained on foreign soil for eight years, overwhelmed with wretchedness.

That large tribute paid, I returned to France in 1800. Bonaparte found me and gave me a place; on the death of the Duke d’Enghien, I devoted myself once more to the memory of the Bourbons. My words on the tomb of Mesdames at Trieste stirred the anger of that Dispenser of Empires; he threatened to have me cut down on the steps of the Tuileries. My pamphlet *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons* was worth a hundred thousand men to Louis XVIII on his own admission.

With the help of the popularity I then enjoyed, anti-constitutional France was taught the institutions of the Legitimate Royalty. During the Hundred Days, the monarchy saw me alongside it in its second exile. Finally, by the War in Spain, I contributed to stifling conspiracy, reuniting opinion under the same



cockade, and giving scope to our cannon. The rest of my projects are known: to push back our frontiers, and grant new Crowns in the New World to the family of Saint Louis.

That long perseverance in the same sentiments merits perhaps some regard. Sensible to affront, it was also impossible for me to ignore what I should be worth, to forget absolutely that I was a restorer of religion, author of *Le Génie du Christianisme*.

My agitation further increased of necessity at the thought that a petty quarrel could lose our country a moment of the greatness it would not find again. If someone had said to me: '*Your scheme will be followed; we will execute without you what you have planned*', I would have suppressed all for France. Unfortunately I believed they would not adopt my ideas; events proved it so.

I was wrong perhaps, but I was persuaded that Monsieur de Villèle did not understand the society he was in charge of; I am convinced that the solid qualities of that skillful Minister were inadequate to his hour of government: he came too early in the Restoration. The operations of finance, commercial groups, industrialization, canals, steamships, railways, arterial roads, a materialistic society which only wanted peace, which only dreamed of a comfortable life, which wanted to make of the future a perpetual today, in that scheme of things, Monsieur de Villèle would have been King. Monsieur de Villèle wished for an age which could not be his, and, honorably, could not accept the age that was made for him. Under the Restoration, all the faculties of the spirit were alive; every party dreamed of realities or chimeras; all, advancing or retreating, jostled about in tumult; no one intended to stay where he was; the constitutional Legitimacy did not appear to any active mind the last word in republicanism or monarchy. One could feel armies and revolutions moving the earth under one's feet, offering themselves to extraordinary destinies. Monsieur de Villèle was alive to this stirring; he saw the fledgling wings, that urging on the nation, would release it to its element, the air, to space, immense and light as that is. Monsieur de Villèle wanted to hold the nation to the ground, fasten it down here, but he had not the strength to do so. I wished to occupy the French with glory, attach them to the heights, and try to lead them to reality by dreams: that is what they love.

It would have been better to be humbler, bow more, and be more of a Christian. Unfortunately, I am subject to error; I lack angelic perfection; if a man strikes me, I do not turn the other cheek.

If I had divined the outcome, I would certainly have abstained; the majority who voted for the clause regarding the '*refusal to contest*' would not have voted if they had foreseen the consequences of their vote. No one seriously wanted a disaster, except a few solitary individuals. It was only a revolt at first, and the Legitimacy alone transformed it into a revolution: when the moment came, it abandoned intelligence, prudence, and the willpower that might still have saved it. After all, it was merely a fallen monarchy; plenty of others will fall: I owed it only my loyalty; it will have that forever.

Devoted to the monarchy in its first adversities, I am consecrated to it in its final misfortunes: wretchedness always finds a second in me. I have forsaken everything, place, pension, and honors; and in order not to have to ask anyone for anything, I have even contracted against my coffin. Austere and unbending judges, virtuous and infallible Royalists, who have added an oath to your riches, as you sprinkle salt on the meat for your table to preserve it, show a little indulgence in respect of my past bitterness, I expiate it today in my own way, which is not yours. Do you think that at the evening hour, at that hour when the laboring man rests, he no longer feels the weight of life, when that weight is shifted

onto his arms? And yet, I could have not borne the burden, I saw Louis-Philippe in his Palace, from the 1st to the 6th of August 1830, and I will speak of it in its proper place; it was for me to decide whether to listen to generous words.

Later, if I had happened to repent of having done the right thing, it was still possible for me to retreat from the first actions dictated by my conscience. Monsieur Benjamin Constant, then in power, wrote to me on the 20th of September 1830: *'I would much prefer to write to you about yourself than about myself, that being a subject of greater importance. I would like to be able to speak about the loss you force the whole of France to suffer by retiring from her affairs, you who exercised so noble and salutary an influence on her! But it would be an indiscretion to treat personal matters thus, and I must, while grieving like all French people, respect your scruples.'*

Not feeling that my debts had yet been paid, I defended the widow and the orphan, I suffered prosecution and imprisonment, which even Bonaparte, at his most angered, had spared me. I am present from my resignation on the death of the Duc d'Enghien to my outcry for the disinherited child; I am there in support of a Prince who was shot and a Prince who was banished; they sustain my old arms interlinked with their powerless ones: Royalists are you as well companioned?

But the more I bound my life with ties of devotion and honor, the more I exchanged freedom of action for independence of thought; that thought has returned to its natural self. Now, free of it all, I appreciate government for what it is worth. Can one believe in future kings? Must one believe in the people of our age? The wise man un-reconciled to this century without conviction, finds wretched peace only in political atheism. Let the younger generations lull themselves with hope: before reaching their goal, they will have to wait many years; the ages are tending towards a universal levelling, but they will not hasten their march at our beck and call: time is the measure of eternity appropriate to mortal things; it counts nations and their sorrows as nothing while accomplishing its work.

The deduction from what you have just read is that if what I had counselled had been done; that if the satisfaction of narrow desires had not been preferred to the interests of France; that if the powerful had better appreciated their relative capabilities, that if Foreign governments had judged, as Alexander did, that the health of the monarchy lay in liberal institutions; that if those governments had not supported established authority in defiance of the principles embodied in the Charter, the Legitimacy would still occupy the throne! Ah, what is done is done! One may well return to the past, journey back to the place one departed from, one will find nothing of what one left behind: men, ideas, and circumstances, all have vanished.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 18

#### Madame de Staël – Her first trip to Germany – Madame Récamier in Paris

Let us return once more to times past.

A letter published in *Le Mercure* had caught Madame de Staël's attention. I have said that Madame Bacciochi, at Monsieur de Fontane's request, had solicited and obtained my erasure from the list of *émigrés* with which Madame de Staël had concerned herself. I went to thank Madame de Staël, and it was at her house that I saw Madame Récamier for the first time, so highly regarded for her fame and her beauty. Madame Recamier had established, with that illustrious woman, a friendship which became deeper each day. *'That friendship was strengthened,' Benjamin Constant said, 'by a profound sentiment which both experienced: a sisterly love.'*

Madame de Staël, threatened with exile, decided to establish herself at Maffliers, in the countryside twenty miles or so from Paris. She accepted a suggestion Madame Récamier made to her, on returning from England, of spending a few days with her at Saint-Brice, then returned to her previous refuge. She gives an account of what happened to her next in her *Ten Years of Exile*.

Madame de Staël, who planned to return to Coppet, was forced to leave on her first journey to Germany. It was then that she wrote to me about the death of Madame de Beaumont, a letter which I have cited during my first trip to Rome.

At her house in Paris, Madame Récamier brought together all the most distinguished members of the oppressed parties. Bonaparte could not tolerate anyone else's success, especially that of a woman. He said: *'Since when was the Council held at Madame Récamier's?'* Bernadotte, who later became the Royal Prince of Sweden, was very attractive, Benjamin Constant says, *'at first sight, but what places an obstacle in the way of any joint plan of campaign with him, is his habit of haranguing everyone, a result of his revolutionary education.'*

There is only one name one can set beside that of Napoleon and that is Moreau, though Moreau had his own unique virtues.

When Moreau found himself implicated in the trials of Pichegru and Georges Cadoudal, Madame Récamier remained persuaded that he was not involved in the Generals' plot against Napoleon, and had not wished to involve himself with Bernadotte's plans. The night preceding the sentencing, all Paris was abroad, with floods of people heading for the Palais de Justice. George did not wish for a reprieve. He replied to those who wished to request one: *'Will you show me a finer opportunity to die?'*

Moreau, condemned to deportation, set out for Cadiz from where he travelled to America. Madame Moreau went to join him. Madame Recamier was with her when she left. She watched her embrace her son in his cradle, and watched her retrace her steps to hug him again: she led her to her carriage and received her last farewells.

General Moreau wrote this letter to his generous friend from Cadiz:

*‘Chiclana (near Cadiz), the 12th of October 1804.*

*Madame, you will doubtless learn with some pleasure news of two fugitives in whom you have shown so much interest. After suffering every kind of discomfort, on land and sea, we were hoping to rest in Cadiz, when yellow fever, which in some respects can be compared to the ills we have just experienced, came and laid siege to that city.*

*Though my wife’s childbirth obliged us to remain here for more than a month during the plague, we have been so fortunate as to escape contagion: only one of our people was affected.*

*At last we are at Chiclana, a very pretty village a few miles from Cadiz, enjoying a healthy climate, and my wife is convalescing fully, after having given me a daughter who is also in very good health.*

*Persuaded that you take as much interest in that event as in all which happens to us, she charges me with informing you of it and recalling her to your memory.*

*I will not describe the kind of life we lead: it is exceedingly boring and monotonous; but at least we can breathe freely, even in the land of the Inquisition.*

*I beg you, Madame, to accept assurance of my respectful attachment and believe me always,*

*Your very humble and obedient servant,*

*Vr. MOREAU’*

This letter is dated from Chiclana, a place which seemed to promise the certainty of the throne, as well as glory, to Monseigneur le Duc d’Angoulême: and yet his appearance on that shore was merely as inevitable as Moreau’s, whom one had thought devoted to the Bourbons: Moreau, in the depths of his heart, was devoted to liberty. When he had the misfortune to join with the Coalition, it was simply a question in his eyes of combating Bonaparte’s despotism, Louis XVIII said to Monsieur de Montmorency who deplored Moreau’s death as a great loss to the Crown: ‘Not so great: Moreau was a Republican.’

The General returned to Europe only to be struck by a cannonball on which his name had been engraved by the hand of God.

Moreau reminds me of another illustrious officer, Masséna: the latter joined the Army of Italy; he asked Madame de Recamier for a white ribbon from her finery. One day she received this note in Masséna’s hand:

*‘The charming ribbon donated by Madame Récamier has been carried by General Massena in battle and at the siege of Genoa: the General has never been parted from it, and it has continually favored him with victory.’*

The old style of manners penetrated the new style of which it forms the basis. The gallantry of a noble knight revealed itself in the plebeian soldier; a memory of the Tournaments and the Crusades was buried in those feats of arms with which modern France has crowned its ancient victories.



## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 19

Madame de Staël's return — Madame Récamier at Coppet — Prince Augustus of Prussia

At that time, Monsieur Récamier's bankruptcy entailed that of his wife. Madame de Staël at Coppet was soon informed: she immediately wrote a quite admirable letter to Madame Récamier which is often quoted. Her friends remained to her '*and this time*,' as Monsieur Ballanche has said, '*wealth alone vanished*.'

Madame de Staël lured her friend to Coppet. Prince Augustus of Prussia, who had been taken prisoner at Prenzlau, passed through Geneva on his way to Italy: he fell passionately in love with Madame Récamier. The private and intimate life of every man goes on within the wider world of blood-stained battles and Empires in transformation: the rich man wakes to view his gilded paneling, the poor his smoke-blackened rafters; the same ray of sunlight illuminates them both.

Prince Augustus, thinking that Madame Récamier might consent to a divorce, proposed marriage to her.

A monument to this passion is the painting of *Corinne* which the Prince obtained from Gérard; he made Madame Récamier a present of it as a deathless memento of the feeling which had inspired him, and the glorious friendship which united *Corinne* and *Juliette*.

The summer passed in celebrations: the world was turned upside down, but the echoes of disaster mingled with the delights of youth redoubled their charm; one gives oneself up to pleasures all the more eagerly, when one feels one is close to losing them.

Madame de Genlis has written a novel on this attachment of Prince Augustus'. I found her one day in all the ardor of composition. She lived in the Arsenal in the midst of dusty books in a gloomy apartment. She expected no one; she was dressed in a black gown; her white hair veiled her face; she held a harp between her knees and her head was bowed on her chest. Touching the strings of the instrument, she brushed two pale thin hands across either side of the sonorous frame from which she drew delicate sounds, like distant and indistinct voices of the dead. What was this ancient Sibyl singing of? She was singing of Madame Récamier.

At first she had disliked her, but in the event she was conquered by her beauty and unhappiness.

Madame de Stael, in the prime of her life, loved Madame Recamier. Madame de Genlis in her old age found for her the accents of youth. I was unknown then, I who have since lost everyone, I whose friends have vanished, I who hear only the cries of shades from the other shore; I will soon go to meet again those predecessors who call to me. The things which have escaped me would destroy me if I were not on the brink of the tomb; but so close to eternal oblivion, truths and dreams are equally helpless; at life's end all is merely time lost.

## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 20

Madame de Staël's second trip — Madame de Staël's letter to Bonaparte – The Château de Chaumont

Madame de Staël left for Germany for a second time. The letters she wrote to Madame Récamier are delightful; there is nothing in Madame de Stael's published works to compare with the naturalness and eloquence of these letters where imagination lends expression to feeling. The virtue of friendship with Madame Récamier must have been great, since she knew how to produce in a woman of genius what was previously hidden, and un-revealed by her talent. Moreover one divines in Madame de Staël's saddened tones a secret unhappiness to which beauty is by nature a confidante; that could never receive a like blessing.

Madame de Staël, having returned to France, went, in the spring of 1810, to live in the Château of Chaumont on the banks of the Loire, forty leagues (120 miles) from Paris, a distance determined by the terms of her exile.

Madame Récamier joined Madame de Staël at Chaumont. The latter edited the proofs of her work on Germany; when it was almost ready for publication, she sent it to Bonaparte, with this letter:

‘Sire,

*I take the liberty of presenting to Your Majesty my work on Germany. If you deign to read it I think you will find there proof of a mind capable of reflection, which time has ripened. Sire, it is twelve years since I saw Your Majesty and was exiled. Twelve years of misery alters anyone's character, and fate teaches resignation to all who suffer. As I am about to travel, I beg Your Majesty to grant me a half-hour's interview, I believe I have things to say which might interest you, and it is on those grounds that I beg you to grant me the favor of an audience before I leave. I will permit myself one thing only in this letter: an explanation of the motives which will oblige me to leave the continent if I cannot obtain Your Majesty's permission to stay somewhere nearer Paris, so that my children can live there. The disgrace Your Majesty inflicts on those who are its object causes them such disfavor in Europe that I cannot move a step without incurring its effects. Some fear to compromise themselves by meeting me, others consider themselves Romans for triumphing over that fear. The simplest relations of society become services rendered which a proud spirit cannot bear. Amongst my friends, there are those who identify with my fate with admirable generosity; but I have seen the most intimate feelings destroyed by the necessity of living with me in solitude, and I have spent the last eight years of my life between the fear of my no longer being the recipient of such sacrifices, and the sorrow of my being their object. Perhaps it is absurd to enter into the details of such feelings with the sovereign of the world; but what you have granted the world, Sire, is a sovereign of genius. And when it is a question of observing the human heart, Your Majesty understands the greatest spirits as well as the most delicate. My sons have no careers, my daughter is thirteen; in a few years' time she must be established in life: it would be egoism to force her to live in the insipid circumstances to which I am condemned. Must I be exiled from her as well! This life is intolerable, and I know no remedy for it on the continent. What city can I choose where the disgrace inflicted by Your Majesty will not present an invincible obstacle to my establishing my children in life, and to my personal tranquility? Perhaps Your Majesty does not himself understand the fear in which exiles hold the majority of the authorities in all countries, and I may be amongst the class of things he is told of that surely exceed*

*what he ordered. Your Majesty has been told that I regret Paris because of the Museum and Talma: that is a delightful jest regarding exile, that is to say regarding something which Cicero and Bolingbroke have called the most unendurable of all; but if I love the masterpieces of art that France owes to Your Majesty's conquests, if I love those fine tragedies, images of heroism, can you blame me, Sire? Is not the happiness of every individual determined by the natures of their faculties, and if Heaven gave me talent, have I not also an imagination which renders the pleasures of art and the mind essential to me? So many people ask Your Majesty for real benefits of every sort! Why should I blush to ask for friendship, poetry, music, pictures, all that ideal existence which I can enjoy without neglecting the submission I owe to the French Monarch?'*

This previously unknown letter is worth conserving. Madame de Staël was heard no more than I was, when I also felt obliged to address myself to Bonaparte, to ask him for the life of my cousin Armand. Alexander or Caesar would have been moved by this letter and its noble tone, written by so illustrious a woman; but that knowledge of self-worth that judges itself and identifies itself with supreme power, that kind of mental familiarity that places itself on a level with the master of Europe, to deal with him head to head, seemed like the arrogance of self-interest, to Bonaparte: he considered himself challenged by all which showed any independent greatness; fawning was loyalty to him, pride defiance; he forgot that true talent only recognizes Napoleons by their genius, that it has entrance to palaces as to temples because it is immortal.



## BOOK XXVIII

### CHAPTER 21

Madame Récamier and Monsieur de Montmorency are exiled — Madame Récamier at Chalons

Madame de Staël returned to Coppet; Madame Récamier hastened to join her again; Monsieur Mathieu de Montmorency remained equally devoted to her; both were punished; the same punishment they had gone to relieve was inflicted on them. The forty leagues distance from Paris was maintained.

Madame Récamier withdrew to Châlons-sur-Marne, her choice being influenced by the neighboring presence of Montmirail where Messieurs de La Rochefoucauld-Doudeauville lived. A host of details of Bonaparte's tyrannies were lost in the general oppression: the persecuted dreaded their friends' visits, fearing to compromise them; their friends dared not seek them out, afraid of causing them some increased severity. The unfortunate person became a plague-victim isolated from humankind, living in quarantine due to a despot's hatred. Welcomed while one suppressed one's freedom of opinion, as soon as it became evident, all turned their backs on you; around you, remained only officials spying on your relationships, your sentiments, your correspondence, your thoughts. Such were those days of freedom and happiness.

Madame de Staël wrote to Madame Récamier saying that she did not wish to see her at Coppet because of her apprehension of the ill-luck she might bring her; but she did not tell all: she had secretly married Monsieur Rocca, resulting in an embarrassing complication from which the Imperial police profited. Madame Récamier was rightly astonished at the obstinacy with which Madame de Staël forbade her to visit Coppet. Hurt by her friend's insistence, a friend for whom she had already sacrificed herself, she no less persisted in her resolution to share the dangers of Coppet.

A whole year went by in this state of uncertainty. Madame de Staël's letters reveal the sufferings of those times, when the talented were threatened at every instant with being flung in jail, when one aspired to flee as the only deliverance: when freedom vanishes, a country remains, but not a homeland.

**End of Book XXVIII**

BOOK XXIX  
CHAPTER 1  
Madame Récamier

*(Extracts from the 1839 material excised from the 1847-1848 revision)*

Before passing on to my Rome Embassy, to that Italy, the dream of my days; before continuing my tale, I ought to speak a little more of that woman who will not be lost from sight throughout the rest of these *Memoirs*. A correspondence is about to be opened between her and myself: the reader should therefore know more of whom I speak, and how and when I came to know Madame Récamier.

In the various ranks of society she met more or less famous people playing their parts on the world's stage; all worshipped her; her beauty mingles its ideal existence with the material facts of our history; a serene light illuminating a stormy picture. Let us return once more to time past; and try by the light of my setting sun to sketch a portrait in the heavens, over which an approaching night will soon spread its shadow.

After my return to France in 1800, as I have mentioned, a letter published in the *Mercure* caught the attention of Madame de Staël. I had not yet been erased from the list of émigrés: Atala drew me from obscurity. Madame Bacciochi (Élisa Bonaparte), at Monsieur Fontane's request, asked for and obtained the erasure. It was Christian de Lamoignon who introduced me to Madame Récamier; she was living at that time in her elegant mansion on the Rue du Mont-Blanc. Coming from my forests and my obscurity, I was still extremely shy; I scarcely dared raise my eyes to a woman surrounded by admirers, and placed so far above me by her beauty and her fame.

One morning, about a month later, I was at Madame de Staël's; she received me while she was being dressed by Mademoiselle Olive, during which process she talked to me while toying with a little green twig held between her fingers: suddenly Madame Récamier entered wearing a white dress; she sat down in the center of a blue silk sofa; Madame de Staël remained standing and continued her conversation, in a very lively manner and speaking quite eloquently; I scarcely replied, my eyes fixed on Madame Récamier. I asked myself whether I was viewing a picture of ingenuousness or voluptuousness. I had never imagined anything to equal her and I was more discouraged than ever; my roused admiration turned to annoyance with myself. I think I begged Heaven to age this angel, to reduce her divinity a little, to set less distance between us. When I dreamed of my *Sylph*, I endowed myself with all the perfections to please her; when I thought of Madame Récamier I lessened her charms to bring her closer to me: it was clear I loved the reality more than the dream. Madame Récamier left and I did not see her again for twelve years.

Twelve years! What hostile power culls and wastes our days like this, lavishing them, ironically, on all the indifferent relationships called attachments, on all the wretched things known as joys! Then, in further derision, when it has withered and spent the most precious part of life, returns us to our point of departure. And what state does it return us in? With minds obsessed with strange ideas, importunate phantoms, and false or incomplete feelings for a world which has brought us no lasting happiness. Those ideas, phantoms, feelings interpose between us and the happiness we might still enjoy. We return with hearts ravaged by regret, grieved for our youthful errors, so painful to the memory in the modesty of age. That is how I returned after visiting Rome, and Syria; after watching the passing of an Empire, after becoming a

man of the crowd, and ceasing to be a man of solitude and silence, such as I had been when I saw Madame Récamier for the first time. What had she been doing? What had her life been like?

Montaigne says that men go gaping after future things: I am obsessed with gaping at things past. Everything is delight, especially when one turns one's gaze on the childhood years of those one cherishes: one extends a life beloved; one casts the affection one feels over days one has not known, and breathes new life into; one embellishes what was with what is, and rewards youth: moreover one is without apprehension, since one has the experience only for oneself; through the qualities one has discovered there, one knows that the relationship started in that springtime can make no use of its wings and can never wither from its first morning.

In Lyons I saw the *Jardin des Plantes* established near the amphitheater in the gardens of the former *Abbaye de la Déserte*, now demolished: the Rhône and Saône are at your feet; in the distance Europe's highest mountain rises, the first Roman milestone on the road to Italy, a white signpost above the clouds.

Madame Récamier was placed in that Abbey; she spent her childhood behind its grill, which only opened onto the church beyond at the Elevation of the Host. Then one could see young girls prostrating themselves in the chapel inside the Convent. The Abbess's name-day was the community's principal day of celebration; the most beautiful of the girls paid the customary compliments: dressed in her finery, her hair plaited, her head was veiled and crowned by her companions; and all was done without speaking, since the hour of rising was one of those named as an hour of *profound silence* in the convents. It goes without saying that *Juliette* had the honors of the day.

Her father and mother, established in Paris, summoned their children to them. With the rough sketches written by Madame Recamier I received this note:

*'On the eve of the day when my aunt came to fetch me, I was led to the Abbess' room to receive her blessing. On the next day, bathed in tears, I passed through the egress whose door I could not remember opening to allow my entry, and found myself in a carriage with my aunt, and we left for Paris.'*

*I left that time of peace and purity with regret, in order to enter one of anxiety. It comes back to me sometimes like a vague sweet dream with its clouds of incense, its endless ceremony, its processions through the gardens, its hymns and flowers.'*

Those hours extracted from a *desert* of piety, now repose in a different religious solitude, having lost nothing of their freshness and harmony.

During the brief Peace of Amiens (1802), Madame Récamier paid a visit to London with her mother.

Such is the power of novelty in England, that the newspapers next morning were full of the arrival of the foreign Beauty. Madame Récamier received visits from everyone to whom she had sent letters. Among these persons the most remarkable was the Duchess of Devonshire, who was then between forty-five and fifty years of age. She was still fashionable and beautiful though she had lost an eye, a fact which she hid with a lock of hair. The first time Madame Récamier appeared in public, it was in her company. The Duchess directed her to her box at the Opera where she met the Prince of Wales, the Duc d'Orléans, and the latter's brothers the Duc de Montpensier and the Comte de Beaujolais; the first two were to become

Kings, one was in reach of the throne, and the other separated from it by the abyss. Lorgnettes and eyes turned towards the Duchess' box. The Prince of Wales told Madame de Récamier that if she did not want to be stifled she must leave before the end of the performance. She had scarcely risen when the doors of the boxes were flung open: she could not escape and was swept to her carriage by the tide of people.

Next day Madame Récamier went to Kensington Gardens accompanied by the Marquess of Douglas, later Duke of Hamilton, who has since welcomed Charles X to Holyrood, and his sister the Duchess of Somerset. The crowd followed hard on the fair foreigner's heels. This phenomenon was repeated every time she showed herself in public; the newspapers resounded with her name, and her portrait, engraved by Bartolozzi, was distributed throughout England. The author of Antigone, Monsieur Ballanche, adds that ships carried it as far as the Isles of Greece: beauty returning to the place where its image was invented. We have an unfinished portrait of Madame Récamier by David, a full-length portrait by Gérard, and a bust by Canova. The portrait is Gérard's masterpiece; it is delightful, but does not please me, because I recognize the features without recognizing the expression of the model.

On the eve of Madame Récamier's departure, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Devonshire asked leave to call on her and bring with them some of their set. Requests multiplying, the assembly was numerous. There was music; Madame Récamier, with the Chevalier Marin, the leading harpist of the day, performed variations on a theme of Mozart, which were dedicated to her. The English newspapers were full of the details of this soirée. They noted the deeply animated and gracious enthusiasm of the Prince of Wales, and his undivided attention to the beautiful foreigner.

The next day she set sail for The Hague, taking three days for a sixteen hour crossing. She told me that during those storm-wracked days, she read Le Génie du Christianisme; I was *revealed* to her, according to her generous expression: I recognize there the kindness the winds and seas have always shown me.

Madame Récamier was in Naples in February 1814; where was I? In the Vallée-aux-Loups, I was beginning the story of my life. I occupied myself writing about my childhood games to the sound of foreign soldiers. The woman whose name should close these *Memoirs* was wandering the shores of Baiae. Did I have a presentiment of the good which would one day come to me from that land, when I described the seductions of Parthenope in The Martyrs:

*'Each morning, as soon as dawn broke, I went out to the portico. The sun rose in front of me; it illuminated with its gentlest fires the range of hills above Salerno, the blue sea scattered with the white sails of fishing boats, the islands of Capri, Ischia and Procida, Cape Miseno and Baiae with their enchantments.*

*Flowers and fruits, moist with dew, are less sweet and fresh than the landscape of Naples emerging from the shadows of night. I was always surprised on reaching the portico to find myself at the edge of the sea: since the waves, in that strait, sounded with barely a fountain's light murmur. Ecstatic before this scene I leant against a pillar, and without thought, desire, or plan, spent whole hours breathing the delicious air. The spell was so deep that it seemed as if that divine air transformed my own substance and that with inexpressible delight I was lifted towards the firmament like a pure spirit....*

*To wait for beauty or to seek her, to see her approaching on her seashell, and smiling at us from the midst of the waves; to sail with her across the flood, scattering flowers over its surface, to follow the*

*enchantress into the depths of those myrtle groves and to the happy fields where Virgil places his Elysium; such was the occupation of our days...*

*Perhaps it is a climate dangerous to virtue, because of its extreme sensuousness? Is that not what an ingenious legend would like to tell us, by recounting that Parthenope was built about a Siren's tomb? At Naples, the velvet brightness of the countryside, the mild temperature of the air, the contours rounding the hills, the soft curves of rivers and valleys, are as seductive to the senses as all peace is....*

*To escape the heat of midday, we would retire to a section of the Palace built above the sea. Lying there on beds adorned with ivory, we would listen to the murmur of the waves beneath our heads. If some storm surprised us in the depth of our retreat, slaves would light the lamps filled with the most precious nard of Arabia. Then young Neapolitan girls entered bearing roses from Paestum, in vases from Nola: while the waves sounded outside, they sang and performed tranquil dances for us that recalled the Greek style to me: thus the fictions of the poets were realized for us; they might have been the Nereids playing in Neptune's grotto...'*

Reader, if you grow impatient with my quotations, my recitations, firstly reflect that for all I know you might not have read my works, and then that I can no longer hear you; I sleep beneath the soil you tread: if you want me, stamp with your foot on the earth, you can only insult my bones. Consider moreover that my writings were an essential part of that existence whose leaves I scatter for you. Ah! Did not my Neapolitan sketches contain a deeper reality! Was not the daughter of the Rhône the true woman of my imaginary delights! Yet not so: if I was Augustine, Jerome, Eudore, I was so alone; my days in Italy preceded those of Corinne's friend: how fortunate I would have been if they had always belonged to her! How fortunate if I could have spread my entire life under her feet, like a carpet of flowers! But my life is harsh and its asperities wound me. May at least my last moments be tender towards she who consoles them! May my dying hours reflect back to her the gentleness and charm with which she has filled them, she who has been beloved by all and of whom no one has ever complained!

It was during a grievous time for France's glory that I met Madame Récamier again, it was at the time of Madame de Staël's death in 1817. Returning to Paris after the Hundred Days, the author of Delphine had returned ill; I had seen her since at home, and at Madame de Duras' house. Gradually as her state worsened she was obliged to keep to her bed. I went to see her one morning in the Rue Royale; the shutters of her windows were two-thirds closed; the bed was against the wall at the far end of the room, leaving only a narrow space on the left: the curtains drawn back on their rods formed two columns at the head of the bed. Madame de Staël was propped up by pillows in a half-sitting position. I approached, and once my eyes were somewhat accustomed to the gloom, I was able to make out the invalid's features. A feverish flush colored her cheeks. Her splendid eyes met mine in the shadows, and she said to me: 'Bonjour, my dear Francis. *I am suffering, but that does not prevent me from loving you.*' She held out her hand which I pressed and kissed. As I raised my head, I saw something thin and white rising up on the opposite side of the bed in the space by the wall: it was Monsieur de Rocca, haggard, and hollow-cheeked, with bleary eyes and a sallow complexion: he was dying; I had never seen him before, and I never saw him again. He did not open his mouth; he bowed as he passed me; his footsteps were inaudible: he went away like a shadow. Stopping for a moment at the door, a scrawny figure twisting its fingers, he turned back towards the bed, to wave goodbye to Madame de Staël. Those two spectres gazing at each

other in silence, the one pale and erect, the other sitting there flushed with blood that was ready to flow back once more and congeal at the heart, made one shudder.

A few days later, Madame de Staël changed her lodgings. She invited me to dinner at her apartment in the Rue Neuve des Mathurins; I went there. She was not in the drawing-room and was not even able to dine; though she was unaware that the fatal hour was so close. We sat to the table. I found myself placed next to Madame Récamier. It had been twelve years since I had seen her, and then I had only glimpsed her for a moment. I did not look at her; she did not look at me; we did not exchange a single word. When, towards the end of the meal, she timidly addressed a few words to me about Madame de Staël's illness, I turned my head a little, and raised my eyes, and saw my guardian angel at my right hand.

I should be afraid now to profane with aged lips a feeling which is still young in my memory and whose charm increases as life ebbs away. I draw aside my past years to reveal behind them celestial visions, to hear from the depths of the abyss the harmonies of a happier region.

Madame de Staël died. The last note she wrote to Madame de Duras was traced in big straggling letters like a child's. It contained an affectionate word for *Francis*. The death of talent affects us more than the individual who dies: it is a common grief that afflicts society; everyone suffers the same loss at the same instant.

A considerable portion of the age I have lived in vanished with Madame de Staël; such a gap, which the vanishing of a superior intellect makes in a century, cannot be repaired. Her death made a deep impression on me, mingled with a kind of mysterious amazement: it was at that illustrious woman's house that I had first met Madame Récamier, and after long years of separation it was Madame de Staël once more who brought together two travellers who had become almost strangers to one another: with a funeral banquet she left them a memory of herself and the example of an immortal attachment. I went to see Madame Récamier in the Rue Basse-du-Rempart and later in the Rue d'Anjou. When a man is reunited with his fate, he imagines he has never left it: life according to Pythagoras is merely reminiscence. Who, in the course of his life, does not remember certain little circumstances of no interest to anyone except he who recalls them? The house in the Rue d'Anjou had a garden; in the garden was a lime-tree bower between whose leaves I would see a gleam of moonlight while waiting for Madame Récamier: does it not seem to me now that surely that gleam is mine, and that if I went to that very place I would find it again? Yet I barely remember the sun I have seen shining on so many brows.

It was at that time that I was obliged to sell the Vallée-aux-Loupes, which Madame Récamier rented, going halves with Monsieur de Montmorency. Increasingly tried by fate, Madame Récamier retired to the Abbaye-aux-Bois. A dark corridor connected two little rooms; I maintained that this hallway was lit by a gentle light. The bedroom was furnished with a bookcase, a harp, a piano, a portrait of Madame de Staël, and a view of Coppet by moonlight. On the window sills were pots of flowers.

When, breathless after climbing three flights of stairs, I entered this little cell as dusk was falling, I was entranced. The windows looked out over the Abbaye garden, around the green enclosure of which the nuns made circuits, and in which the schoolgirls ran about. The summit of an acacia tree reached to eye-level and the hills of Sèvres could be seen on the horizon. The setting sun gilded the picture and entered through the open windows. Madame Récamier would be at the piano; the *Angelus* would toll; the notes of the bell, which seemed to mourn the dying day: '*il giorno pianger che si more*', mingled with the final

accents of the invocation to the night from Steibelt's *Romeo and Juliet*. A few birds would come and settle on the raised window-blinds. I would merge with the distant silence and solitude, above the noise and tumult of a great city.

God, in giving me these hours of calm, compensated me for my hours of trouble; I caught a glimpse of the future peace which my faith believes in and my hopes invoke. Worried as I was elsewhere by political affairs, or disgusted by the ingratitude of the Court, tranquility of heart awaited me in the depths of that retreat, like the coolness of the woods on leaving a scorching plain. I recovered my calm beside a woman who spread serenity around her, without it being too level a tranquility, for it passed among profound affections. Alas! The men whom I used to meet at Madame Récamier's, Mathieu de Montmorency, Camille Jordan, Benjamin Constant, the Duc de Laval have gone to join Hingant, Joubert, Fontanes, other absentees of an absent company. Among that succession of friendships other young friends arose, springtime shoots in an old forest where the felling is eternal. I ask of them, I ask of Monsieur Ampère, who will happily take my place when I am gone, and who will read this in editing my proofs, I ask them one and all to preserve a memory of me: I hand them the thread of a life whose end Lachesis is loosing from the spindle. My inseparable friend on the road, Monsieur Ballanche, finds himself alone at the end of my career as he was at the beginning; he has been the witness of my friendships severed by time, as I have been witness to his swept away by the Rhône. Rivers always undermine their banks.

My friends' misfortunes have often weighed on me and I have never shirked those sacred burdens: the moment of reward has arrived: a serious attachment deigns to help me bear whatever their weight adds to wretched days. Approaching my end, it seems to me that all I have loved I have loved in Madame Récamier, and that she was the hidden source of all my affections. My memories of various times, those of my dreams, as well as those of my realities, have been kneaded together, blended to make a compound of charms and sweet sufferings, of which she has become the visible form. She rules over my feelings, in the same way that Heaven's authority has brought happiness, order and peace to my duties.

I have followed the fair traveller along the path she has trodden so lightly; I will soon go before her to a new country. Wandering through these *Memoirs*, through the passages of this Basilica I am hastening to complete, she may come across this chapel which I dedicate to her; it may please her perhaps to rest here a moment: I have placed her image here.

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 2

#### The Rome Embassy - Three kinds of material – My Travel Journal

What I have just written in 1839 of Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier is linked to this book concerning my Embassy in Rome written in 1828 and 1829, ten years ago. I have introduced the reader to a *little circuitous by-way* of the Empire, while that Empire continued its common progress; I now find myself led on to my Rome Embassy. There is abundant material for this book. It is of three kinds:

The first contains the history of my intimate feelings and my private life as related in letters addressed to Madame Récamier.

The second reveals my public life; in my dispatches.

The third is a mixture of historical details on the Papacy, the ancient society of Rome, the changes in that society from century to century, etc.

Among these investigations are thoughts and *descriptions*, the fruit of my walks. It was all written in the space of seven months, during the period of my Embassy, in the midst of celebrations and serious affairs (in re-reading these manuscripts I have only added a few passages from works published after the date of my Rome Embassy). However, my health had altered: I could not raise my eyes without experiencing dizziness; to admire the sky, I was forced to place it on my own level, by ascending the heights of a Palace or a hillside. But I countered weariness of the body by applying the spirit: exercising my mind renewed my physical strength; what might have killed another man gave me life.

In seeing it all again, one thing struck me: on my arrival in the Eternal City, I felt a certain displeasure, and I thought for a while that everything had changed; little by little the fever for ruins gripped me, and I ended, like a thousand other travellers, by adoring what had at first left me cold. Nostalgia is regret for one's native land: on the banks of the Tiber one also feels *home sickness*, but it produces an opposite effect to its customary one: you are seized with a love for solitude and disgust with your homeland. I had already experienced that *sickness* during my first journey, and could have said:

*'Agnosco verteris vestigia flammae -  
I recognize the traces of the ancient flame.'*

You know that on the formation of Martignac's government the name of Italy alone had rid me of my remaining objections; but I am never sure of my moods in matters of pleasure: I had no sooner parted from Madame de Chateaubriand than my innate melancholy met me on the road. You can persuade yourself of that from my travel journal.

#### TRAVEL JOURNAL

'Lausanne, 22nd September 1828.

I left Paris on the 14th of this month; I spent the 15th at Villeneuve-sur-Yonne; what memories! Joubert is gone; the deserted Château of Passy has changed ownership; it has been said: *'Be the cicada in the night. Esto cicada noctium'*.



Arona, 27th of September.

Arriving at Lausanne on the 20th, I have followed the route along which two other women who wished me well have vanished, and who, in the order of things should have survived me: the one, Madame la Marquise de Custine, has recently died at Bex, the other, Madame la Duchesse de Duras, not a year ago, hastened to Simplon, fleeing the death which came to her at Nice.

*“Noble Clara, worthy, constant friend,  
Your memory here’s no more alive:  
From this grave they turn their eyes:  
The world forgets, and your name has end!”*

The last letter I received from Madame de Duras is full of the bitterness of that last taste of life which is bound to weary us all:

*“Nice, 14th November 1827.*

*I have sent you an asclepias carnata: it is a ‘laurel’ growing on open ground which tolerates cold and has a red flower like a camellia, with an excellent scent; place it beneath the Benedictine’s library window.*

*I will give you a little of my news: it is always the same; I languish on my sofa all day, that is to say whenever I am not in my carriage or walking out; which I can’t do for more than a half-hour. I dream of the past; my life has been so restless, so varied, that I cannot say I experience any great boredom: if I could only sew or work on my tapestry, I would not consider myself unfortunate. My present existence is so remote from my past existence, that it seems to me as if I were reading my memoirs or watching a play.”*

Thus, I have returned to Italy, deprived of means, just as I left it twenty-five years ago. But in those days I could repair my losses, now who would wish to associate with old age? No one cares to inhabit a ruin.

In that very town of Simplon I saw the first smile of a happy dawn. The rocks, whose blackened base stretched to my feet, shone rose-red to the summits of the mountains, struck by the sun’s rays. To leave the shadows it is enough to raise oneself towards the Heavens.

If Italy had lost its luster for me since my trip to Verona in 1822, in this year of 1828 it seemed even more faded; I was measuring the passage of time. Leaning on the balcony of an inn at Arona, I gazed at the shores of Lake Maggiore, painted with gold by the setting sun and rimmed with azure waves. Nothing could be as lovely as that landscape edged with the castle’s crenellations. The spectacle invoked in me neither pleasure nor sentiment. Our younger years are mingled with glimpses of hope; a young man wanders with what he loves, or with memories of absent happiness. If he has no close ties, he seeks them; he convinces himself he has found something at every step; joyful thoughts pursue him: the disposition of his soul is reflected in the objects around him.

Moreover, I feel the diminishment of present society less when I am alone. Left to the solitude in which Bonaparte has left the world, I scarcely hear the feeble generations who pass by wailing at the edge of the wilderness.

Bologna, 28th of September 1828.

At Milan, in less than a quarter of an hour, I counted seventeen hunchbacks passing beneath the window of my inn. German punishments have deformed young Italy.

I saw St Charles Borromeo in his tomb whose cradle I had touched at Arona. He had been dead for two hundred and forty four years. He was not lovely to look on.

At Borgo San Donnino, Madame de Chateaubriand rushed into my room in the middle of the night; she had seen her clothes and her straw hat fall from the chairs from which they were hanging. She was convinced we were in an inn haunted by ghosts or inhabited by thieves. I had not experienced any disturbance in bed: yet it is true that an earthquake was felt in the Apennines: what overthrows cities could certainly make a woman's clothes fall to the floor. That's what I told Madame de Chateaubriand; I also told her that in Spain, in the Vega of the Xenil, I had passed through a village demolished the previous day by a subterranean shock. These noble attempts at consolation had little success, and we hastened to leave that assassins' cave.

The remainder of my journey everywhere revealed the transience of men and the inconstancy of fortune. At Parma, I found a portrait of Napoleon's widow; that daughter of the Caesars is now the wife of Count von Neipperg; mother of the conqueror's son, she has given that son brothers; she guaranteed the heavy debts she had incurred by means of a little Bourbon who was given Lucca, and who if it came to it would inherit the Duchy of Parma.

Bologna seemed less deserted to me than at the time of my first trip. I was received there with the honors with which one astounds Ambassadors. I visited a fine cemetery: I never forget the dead; they are family.

I have never admired Carrachi so much as in the new gallery in Bologna. I thought I was seeing Raphael's St Cecilia for the first time she was so much more divine than in the Louvre, under our soot-daubed sky.'

Ravenna, 1st October 1828.

In the Romagna, a countryside which I did not know, a multitude of towns, their houses coated with whitewash, are perched on the heights of little hills like flocks of white pigeons. Each of these towns offers you masterpieces of modern art or ancient monuments. This region of Italy contains all Roman history; you need to travel it with Livy, Tacitus and Suetonius in hand.

I passed through Imola, the diocese of Pius VII, and Faenza. At Forlì I made a detour to visit Dante's tomb in Ravenna. Approaching the monument, I was seized by that thrill of admiration a great name inspires, when the owner of that name was subject to misfortune. Alfieri, who betrayed on his brow the pallor of death and its hope, prostrated himself on the marble floor and addressed a sonnet to him: "O gran padre Alighier!" Before the tomb I considered the appropriateness of these lines from the Purgatorio:

*"Frate,*

*Lo mondo è cieco, e tu vien ben da lui.*

*Brother,*

*the world is blind, and truly you come from there."*

Beatrice appeared to me; I saw her as she was when she inspired in her poet the desire to sigh and die of weeping: *di sospare, e di morir di pinato*.

"My sorrowful canzone," says the father of the modern Muse, "now go weeping: and find the ladies, and young ladies, to whom your sisters used to bring delight: and you, who are the daughter of my sadness, go, disconsolate, to be with them."

And yet the creator of a new world of poetry forgot Beatrice when she had left the earth; he did not find her again, to adore her with the power of his genius, until he was disillusioned. Beatrice reproached him, as she prepared to show her lover the Heavens: "*For a while I supported him,*" she told the angels of Paradise, "*with my face: showing him my young eyes... but, as soon as I was on the threshold of my second age, and changed existences, he left me and gave himself to others.*"

Dante refused to return to his city at the cost of an apology. He replied to one of his relatives: "*If in order to return to Florence there is no other road open to me than that, I will not return. I can contemplate the sun and stars anywhere.*" Dante denied himself to the Florentines, and Ravenna has denied them his ashes, even though Michelangelo, the risen spirit of the poet, promised to adorn for Florence the funeral monument of one who had learnt how man makes himself eternal.

The painter of the *Last Judgement*, the sculptor of *Moses*, the architect of the *Dome of St Peter's*, the engineer of the *old bastion of Florence*, the poet of the *Sonnets addressed to Dante*, joined with his compatriots and supported the request he presented to Leo X with these words: "*Io, Michel Angolo, scultore, il medesimo a Vostra Santità supplico, offerendomi al divin poeta fare la sepoltura sua condecante e in loco onorevole in questa citta.*"

Michelangelo, whose chisel was deceived in its expectations, had recourse to his crayon to raise a different mausoleum to the author himself. He drew the principal subjects of the *Divine Comedy* on the margins of a folio copy of the great poet's works; a ship, which was carrying this doubly-precious monument from Livorno to Civita-Vecchia, was wrecked.

I was returning, deeply moved, and feeling something of that confusion mixed with divine terror that I experienced in Jerusalem, when my *cicerone* proposed to take me to Lord Byron's house. Ah! What did Childe Harold and Signora Guiccioli matter to me in the presence of Dante and Beatrice! *Childe-Harold* still lacks misfortune and the centuries; let him wait on the future. Byron was poorly inspired in his *Prophecy of Dante*.

I found Constantinople again in San Vitale and Sant' Apollinaire. Honorius and his chicken did not impress me; I preferred Placidia and her adventures, the memory of which returned to me in the Basilica of St John the Evangelist; it is a Roman amongst the Barbarians. Theodoric is still great, though he had Boetius killed. Those Goths were of a superior race; Amalasuntha, banished to an island in Lake Bolsena, with her minister Cassiodorus tried to conserve what remained of Roman civilization. The Exarchs brought Ravenna the decadence of their Empire. Ravenna was Lombard under Aistulf; the Carolingians returned it to Rome. It became subject to its Archbishop then changed finally into a

Republic under a tyrant, having been Guelph and Ghibelline by turns; after leaving the Venetian States, it returned to the Church under Julius II, and is only known today because of Dante.

This city, that Rome gave birth to in its old age, inherited something of its mother's antiquity. All in all, I would like living there; I would enjoy visiting the French Column, erected in memory of the Battle of Ravenna. Cardinal de Medici (Leo X) was present, with Ariosto, Bayard and Lautrec, the brother of the Comtesse de Chateaubriand. There at the age of twenty-four died the handsome Gaston de Foix: "*Notwithstanding the weight of Spanish artillery fire, the French continued to advance,*" says the Loyal Serviteur; "*since God created Heaven and Earth, there was never a harsher or crueller encounter between the French and the Spanish. They rested opposite each other to recover their breath; then, lowering their visors they recommenced more fiercely, shouting out for France and Spain!*" Only a handful of knights remained of so many warriors, who, stamped with the mark of glory, then took Holy Orders.

In some cottage there you might have seen a young girl turning her spindle, her delicate fingers entangled in the hemp; she was not accustomed to such a life; she was a Trivulce. When through her half-open door she saw two waves meet in the flood's expanse, she felt her sadness grow: the woman had been loved by a great King. She continued to wander sadly, through her isolated island, from her cottage to an abandoned church and from that church to her cottage.

The ancient forest I travelled through was composed of forlorn-looking pine-trees; they resembled the masts of galleys beached on the sand. The sun was near to setting when I left Ravenna; I heard the distant sound of a bell ringing: it was summoning the faithful to prayer.'

‘Ancona, 3rd and 4th of October.

Returning to Forlì, I have left it again without having seen the place on the crumbling ramparts where the Duchess Caterina Sforza declared to her enemies, who were ready to cut the throat of her only son, that she could yet be a mother. Pius VII, born at Cesena, was a monk in the fine monastery of Santa Maria del Monte.

Near Savignano I traversed a little torrent in a ravine: when I was told that I had crossed the Rubicon, it was as though a veil had lifted and I saw the world in Caesar's time. My Rubicon is life: a long time ago I left its shore behind.

At Rimini I found neither Francesca, nor the other shade her companion, *who seemed so light upon the wind*:

“*E paion sì al vento esser leggieri*”

Rimini, Pesaro, Fano and Sinigaglia led me to Ancona over bridges and roads left to us by Augustus. In Ancona today they are celebrating the Pope's crowning; I can hear music being played near the triumphal arch of Trajan: double sovereignty of the Eternal City.'

‘Loreto, 5th and 6th October.

We arrived to spend the night in Loreto. The place offers a perfectly preserved *specimen* of a *Roman colony*. The peasant farmers of *Notre-Dame* are affluent and appear happy; the peasant women are pretty

and lively, wearing a flower in their hair. The Governing-Prelate has offered us hospitality. From the tops of the bell-towers and the summits of various heights in the town, there are sunlit views of the countryside, Ancona and the sea. In the evening we had a storm. I enjoyed seeing the *valentia muralis* and the goats' fumitory bowing to the wind on the old walls. I walked beneath the second floor galleries, erected after designs by Bramante. These pavements will be drenched by autumn rain; these blades of grass will quiver in the Adriatic breeze, long after I have passed.

At midnight I retired to a bed eight foot square, consecrated by Napoleon; a night light barely illuminated the gloom of my chamber; suddenly a little door opened, and I witnessed the mysterious entry of a man leading a veiled woman. I raised myself on my elbows and looked at him; he approached my bed and hastened, while bowing to the ground, to offer a thousand excuses for thus disturbing the Ambassador's repose: but he is a widower; he is a poor steward; he desires to marry off his *ragazza* (*daughter*), she is here: unfortunately he lacks means to provide a dowry. He raised the orphan's veil: she was pale, very pretty, and kept her eyes lowered in appropriate modesty. This father of the family had the air of one wishing to depart, leaving the intended to complete the story. In this pressing danger, I did not ask the obliging unfortunate, as the good knight asked the mother of the young girl at Grenoble, if she was a virgin; quite ruffled I took a few pieces of gold from my bedside table and gave them, in honor of the King my master, to the *zitella* (*maid*) *whose eyes were not swollen with weeping*. She kissed my hand in infinite gratitude. I said not a word, and as I lay down again on my immense couch, as if I wished to sleep, the vision of St Anthony vanished. I thanked my patron Saint Francis whose day it was; I dozed in the gloom half-smiling, half-regretful, and with profound admiration for my restraint.

It was thus that I scattered gold once more, as the Ambassador, lodged in style in the residence of the Governor of Loreto, in that same town where Tasso stayed in a foul hovel and where, for lack of cash, he could not continue his journey. He paid his debt to Our Lady of Loreto with his *canzone*:

*"Ecco fra le tempeste e i fieri venti: Here in the storm and wild winds"*

Madame de Chateaubriand made amends for my passing fortune, by mounting the steps of Santa Chiesa on her knees. After my night-time victory, I would have had a greater right than the King of Saxony to deposit my wedding suit in the Loreto treasury; but I can never forgive myself, I a feeble child of *the Muses*, for having been so powerful and so happy, there where the singer of *Jerusalem Delivered* had been so weak and wretched! Torquato, do not consider me in this unusual moment of prosperity; wealth is not natural to me; consider me on my journey to Namur, in my garret in London, in my Paris Infirmery, in order to discover some distant resemblance between us.

I did not, as Montaigne did, leave my portrait in silver in *Our Lady of Loreto*, nor that of my daughter, *Leonora Montana, filia unica: Léonore de Montaigne, our only child*; I have never desired to perpetuate myself: and yet a daughter, and one bearing the name Léonore!

*'Spoleto.*

After leaving Loreto, passing through Macerata, and leaving Tolentino behind which marked Bonaparte's track and recalled a treaty, I climbed the last salient of the Apennines. The mountain plateau is moist and cultivated like a hop-field. On the left were Greek waters, on the right those of Spain; the breath of wind which blew against me might be one I had breathed in Athens or Granada. We descended

towards Umbria, spiraling down through gorges stripped of leaves where the descendants of those mountaineers who furnished soldiers for Rome after the battle of Lake Trasimene are suspended among the thickets.

Foligno possessed a Madonna by Raphael which is now in the Vatican. Vene, in a delightful position, is at the source of the Clitumnus. Poussin has painted the site tenderly and warmly; Byron has sung it coldly.

Spoletto is where the current Pope saw the light. According to my courier Giorgini, Leo XII had settled convicts in this town to honor his birthplace. Spoletto dared to resist Hannibal. She displays several works by Filippo Lippi, who, nurtured in the cloister, a Barbary slave, a kind of Cervantes among painters, died at sixty of poison given him by the relatives of Lucrezia Buti, who was seduced by him, they say.'

*'Civita Castellana.*

At Monte-Luco, Count Potocki buried himself among delightful laurels; but did not thoughts of Rome follow him there? Did he not think himself transported into the midst of *choirs of young girls*? And I too, like St. Jerome, "*I have spent the day and the night uttering cries, striking my breast until the moment God gave me peace.*" I regret no longer being what I was, *plango me non esse quod fuerim*.

Having passed the hermitages of Monte Luco, we began to skirt Somma. I had already taken this road on my first trip from Florence to Rome via Perugia, accompanying a dying woman...

From the nature of the light and a sort of freshness in the landscape, I might have thought I was one on of those rounded tops of the Alleghanies, it was merely a lofty aqueduct, surmounted by a narrow bridge, that recalled a Roman construction, to which the Lombards of Spoleto had set their hand: the Americans have not yet created those monuments which follow the achievement of liberty. I climbed to Somma on foot, with the oxen of Clitumnus which were leading Madame the Ambassadress to her triumph. A lean young goat-girl, as light and nimble as her nanny-goat, followed me, with her little brother, asking for *carita* (*charity*) in that opulent landscape: I gave her alms in memory of Madame de Beaumont whom these places no longer remembered.

*"Alas, regardless of their doom,  
The little victims play!  
No sense have they of ills to come,  
Nor care beyond to-day."*

I found Terni again and its waterfalls. A countryside planted with olive-trees led me to Narni; then, passing through Otricoli, we came to a halt at mournful Civita Castellana. I would have preferred to go to Santa Maria di Falleri to see a town which is no more than the shell of its walls: it is a void within: *wretched humanity brought to God*. My moment of grandeur past, I will return to find the city of the Falisci. From Nero's tomb, I was soon pointing out the cross on St Peter's, to my wife, which dominates the city of the Caesars.'

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 3

#### Letters to Madame Récamier

You have just skimmed through my travel journal; now you can read my letters to Madame Récamier, intermingled, as I have previously said, with pages of history.

In parallel you can peruse my dispatches, here. Visible especially distinctly at this time are the two men who exist within me.

#### TO MADAME RÉCAMIER

*‘Rome, this 11th of October 1828.*

*I have traversed this beautiful country, filled with the memory of you; it consoles me, without eliminating the sadness of all the other memories I encounter again at every step. I have seen that Adriatic once more which I crossed more than twenty years ago, and in what state of mind! At Terni, I had once halted with a poor dying woman. At last I have reached Rome. Its monuments, after those of Athens, as I feared, seem less perfect to me. My memory of places, astonishing and painful at the time, has not allowed me to forget a single stone.*

*I have not yet seen a soul, except the Secretary of State, Cardinal Bernetti. To have someone to talk to, I went to find Guérin, yesterday at sunset: he seemed delighted with my visit. We opened a window on Rome and admired the horizon. It is the only thing which remains, for me, as I saw it: my eyes or the objects of them have changed; perhaps both.’*

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 4

#### Leo XII and the Cardinals

The first hours of my stay in Rome were employed on official visits. His Holiness received me in private audience; public audiences are no longer entertained and cost too much. Leo XII, a very tall prince with an air both serene and sad, was dressed in a simple white cassock; he eschewed splendor and occupied a humble room, almost devoid of marble. He hardly ate; with his cat, he lived on a little *polenta*. He considered himself very ill and watched himself wither away with a resignation filled with Christian joy: like Benedict XIV he chose to store his coffin beneath his bed. Reaching the door of the Pope's apartments, an Abbé led me through dark corridors to His Holiness' refuge or sanctuary. He had not allowed himself time to dress, for fear of keeping me waiting; he rose, came towards me, would not allow me to kneel to kiss the border of his robe instead of his slipper, and led me by the hand to a seat placed to the right of his humble armchair. Once seated, we talked.

On Monday, at seven in the morning, I went to see the Secretary of State, Bernetti, a man of business and pleasure. He was a close friend of Princess Doria; he knew his century and only accepted the Cardinal's hat with reluctance. He had refused to enter the Church, was only certified as a sub-deacon, and could marry tomorrow by relinquishing his hat. He believed in revolutions and went so far as to consider that, if he lived long enough, he had the possibility of seeing the temporal fall of the Papacy.

The Cardinals are divided into three *factions*:

The first is composed of those who seek to advance with the times and among whom are Benvenuti and Opizzoni. Benvenuti is famous for his elimination of brigandage and his mission to Ravenna after Cardinal Rivarola; Opizzoni, Archbishop of Bologna, is reconciled to the diverse opinions in that industrial and literary city which is difficult to govern.

The second *faction* is formed of the *zelanti*, who are attempting to reverse things: one of their leaders is Cardinal Odescalchi.

Finally the third faction covers those who are set in place, the elderly who do not wish to, or cannot, go forwards or backwards: among these old men one finds Cardinal Vidoni, a kind of policeman for the Treaty of Tolentino: tall and fat, shiny-faced, cap askew. When he was told he had a chance of the Papacy, he replied: *Lo santo Spirito sarebbe dunque ubriaco: the Holy Spirit must have been drinking then!* He is planting trees by the Milvian Bridge, where Constantine made the Christian world. I see the trees when I leave Rome by the Porto del Populo and re-enter by the Porto Angelica. From the far distance the Cardinal calls out on seeing me: *Ah! Ah! Signor ambasciadore di Francia!* Then he rages at the planters of pines. He does not follow Cardinals' etiquette; he is accompanied by a single lackey in a carriage when he pleases: one excuses all, by calling him *Madama Vidoni*. (When I left Rome he bought my calash and did me the honor of dying in it on his way to the Milvian Bridge. Note: Paris, 1836)



## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 5

#### The Ambassadors

My ambassadorial colleagues are Count Lutzow, the Austrian Ambassador, a very polite gentleman: his wife sings well, always the same air, and talks endlessly about her *little ones*; the learned Baron Bunsen, Prussian minister and friend of Niebuhr (I am negotiating with him the termination in my favor of the lease on his Palace on the Capitoline); and the Russian minister, Prince Gagarin, exiled among the ancient grandeurs of Rome, because of a transient affair: if he was preferred by the beautiful Madame Narishkin, living for the moment in my former hermitage of Aulnay she must have found some charm in his moodiness; one dominates more by one's faults than one's qualities.

Monsieur de Labrador, the Spanish Ambassador, a loyal gentleman, speaks little, walks alone, and thinks a great deal, or does not think at all, which one I can't quite make out.

Old Count Fuscaldo represents Naples as winter represents spring. He has a large piece of cardboard which he studies through his spectacles, showing not the rose-fields of Paestum, but the names of foreign suspects to whom he must not issue passports. I envy him his Palace (Farnese), a fine unfinished structure, which Michelangelo crowned, which Annibale Carracci adorned, aided by his brother Augustino, the portico of which shelters the sarcophagus of Celicia Metella, which has lost nothing by its change of mausoleum. Fuscaldo, wrecked in mind and body, has, they say, a mistress.

The Comte de Celles, Ambassador of the King of Holland, married Mademoiselle de Valence, now dead: he has two daughters, who, in consequence, are great grand-daughters of Madame de Genlis. Monsieur de Celles remained a Prefect, because he had been one: his character is that blend of loquacity and petty tyranny, of recruiting officer and quartermaster, which one never loses. If you meet a man to whom, instead of feet, yards and acres, you must speak of *decimetres*, *metres* and *hectares*, you have set hands on a Prefect.

Monsieur de Funchal, semi-official Ambassador of Portugal, is grotesque, agitated, grimacing, green as a Brazilian monkey, yellow as a Lisbon orange; yet he sings the praises of his Negress, this new Camoëns! A great amateur musician, he keeps a sort of Paganini in his pay, while awaiting the restoration of his King.

Here and there, I glimpsed the petty intrigues of the Ministers of various petty States, quite scandalized by the trivial value I set on my ambassadorship: their self-importance tight-lipped, muffled, silent, trod stiff-legged taking tiny steps: it seemed ready to burst with secrets, of which it had no knowledge.

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 6

#### Artists ancient and modern

As Ambassador to England in 1822, I searched for the men and places I had formerly known in London in 1793; as Ambassador to the Holy See in 1828, I hurried off to tour the palaces and ruins, and to ask after the people I had seen in Rome in 1803; I found plenty of palaces and ruins; but few of the people.

The Palazzo Lancellotti, previously rented to Cardinal Fesch, is now occupied by its true owners, Prince Lancellotti and Princess Lancellotti, the daughter of Prince Massimo. The house where Madame de Beaumont lived in the Piazza di Spagna has vanished. As for Madame de Beaumont, she is immured in her last rest, and I have prayed at her grave with Pope Leo XII.

Canova equally has taken leave of the world. I visited him twice in his studio in 1803; he received me mallet in hand. He showed me, in the simplest and kindest of manners, his enormous statue of Bonaparte and his 'Hercules hurling Lycas into the waves': he aimed to convince you that he could reach the spirit within the form; but then even his chisel refused to search anatomy deeply enough; despite him, his nymphs remained of the flesh, and Hebe was revealed beneath the wrinkles of his old women. On my wanderings I had met the foremost sculptor of my time; he has fallen from his scaffolding, as Goujon did from the scaffolding of the Louvre; Death is always there to continue his endless Saint Bartholomew's Day, and strike us down with his arrows.

But someone still alive, to my great joy, is my old friend Boguet, doyen of the French painters in Rome. Twice he tried to leave his beloved landscapes; he got as far as Genoa; his heart failed him and he returned to his adopted hearth. I pampered him at the Embassy, as I did his son for whom he showed a mother's tenderness. I started our former walks with him once more; I only perceive his age from the slowness of his steps; I experience a sort of tenderness in pretending to be young, and adjusting my pace to his. Neither of us have long to watch the Tiber flow.

The great artists, in the great eras, led a life quite different to that which artists lead today: attached to the vaults of the Vatican, the sides of St Peter's, the walls of the Villa Farnesina, they worked on their masterpieces suspended in the air alongside them. Raphael walked surrounded by pupils, escorted by Cardinals and Princes, like a senator of ancient Rome preceded and followed by his clients. Charles V posed on three occasions for Titian. He picked up his brush for him, and yielded him right of precedence, just as Francis I attended Leonardo da Vinci on his deathbed. Titian went to Rome in triumph; the great Buonarotti received him: at ninety, Titian, the conqueror of the centuries still held his century-old Venetian paintbrush in a steady hand.

The Grand-Duke of Tuscany had Michelangelo, who had died in Rome after having designed the lantern for the dome of St Peter's, secretly disinterred. Florence, in its magnificent obsequies, expiated over the ashes of its great painter the neglect with which it treated the ashes of Dante, its great poet.

Velasquez visited Italy twice, and Italy twice rose to salute him: the precursor of Murillo took the road back to Spain laden with fruit, picked with her own hands by that Ausonian Hesperia: he brought away a painting by each of the twelve most celebrated painters of his age.

Those famous artists spent their days in celebrations and affairs; they built defenses for towns and castles; they erected churches, places and battlements; they gave and received sword-thrusts, seduced women, took refuge in cloisters, were absolved by Popes and protected by Princes. In an orgy spoken of by Benvenuto Cellini, some other Michelangelo appears, along with Giulio Romano.

Today the scene has altered completely; Artists in Rome live in quiet poverty. Perhaps there is poetry in such a life that is worth more. A confraternity of German painters has set out to take painting back to Perugino, to renew its Christian inspiration. These young neophytes of *St. Luke* claim that Raphael, in his later manner, became a pagan, and that his talent degenerated. Let it be so; let us be pagans like Raphael's virgins; let our talent degenerate and diminish as in his painting of *The Transfiguration!* This honorable error of the new sacred school is no less an error; it would follow from it that rigidity and poor formal design were proof of intuitive vision, yet that expression of faith, notable in the work of *pre-Renaissance* painters, is not because the figures are posed stiffly, as motionless as the Sphinx, but because the painter *believed* as his century did. It is his thought not his art that was religious; a thing so true, that the Spanish school is eminently pious in its expressions, even though it reveals the grace and movement of painting since the Renaissance. Why so: because *the Spanish are Christians*.

I go to see the various artists: the trainee sculptor lives in a grotto, under the green oaks of the Villa Medici, where he is finishing his '*child with a snake drinking from a shell*', in marble. The painter lives in a dilapidated house in a deserted location; I find him alone, capturing a view of the Roman countryside through his open window. Monsieur Schnetz's *La Brigande* has become a mother asking the Madonna for her son's recovery. Léopold Robert, returning from Naples, passed through Rome in the last few days, bringing with him the enchanted landscapes of that lovely clime, which he has done only so as to transfer them to canvas.

Guérin has retired, like a sick dove, to the heights of a pavilion in the Villa Medici. He listens, his head on his shoulder, to the sound of the breeze off the Tiber; when he wakes up he sketches the death of Priam with his pen.

Horace Vernet is trying hard to change styles; will he succeed? The snake he drapes round his neck, the costume he affects, the cigar he smokes, the fencing masks and foils with which he is surrounded, are over-reminiscent of a temporary encampment.

Who has ever heard of my friend Monsieur Quecq, a successor to Julius III in the *casina* created by Michelangelo, Vignola and Taddeo Zuccari? And yet he has painted, in its sequestered Nymphaeum, a rather fine '*Death of Vitellius*'. The uncultivated flower beds are haunted by a cunning creature which Monsieur Quecq is busy pursuing: it is a fox, great grandson of Goupil-Renart, the first of that name and nephew of Isengrin the Wolf.

Pinelli, between two bouts of drunkenness, has promised me twelve scenes, of dancing, gaming and thieves. It is a shame he allows the large dog at his door to die of hunger. Thorwaldsen and Camuccini are the two Princes of the poor artists of Rome.

Occasionally these scattered artists meet, and go together on foot to Subiaco. On the way, they daub grotesques on the walls of the inn at Tivoli. Perhaps one day some Michelangelo will be recognized by his tracings of charcoal over a work by Raphael.

I would like to have been born an artist; solitude, independence, sunlight among the ruins and masterpieces, would have suited me. I have no needs; a piece of bread, a jug of water from the Acqua Felice, would suffice me. My life has been wretchedly snagged by branches along the way; better to have been a bird free to sing and nest among those branches!

Nicholas Poussin bought a house on Monte Pincio with his wife's dowry, facing another villa which belonged to Claude Gelée, called Lorrain.

My latter compatriot Claude also died at the feet of the Queen of the World. While Poussin depicts the Roman countryside even when the scenes of his landscapes are set elsewhere, Lorrain depicts the skies of Rome even when he paints sailing ships and the sun setting over the sea.

If only I had been a contemporary of those privileged creatures in diverse centuries for whom I feel an attraction! But I would have needed to rise from the dead far too often. Poussin and Claude Lorrain have passed to the Capitoline; kings appeared there who were not worthy of them. De Brosse met the English Pretender there; there, in 1803, I saw the King of Sardinia, who had abdicated, and now, in 1828, here I find Napoleon's brother, the King of Westphalia. Rome, deposed, offers a sanctuary to fallen power; its ruins are a place of freedom for persecuted glory and unfortunate talent.

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 7

#### Past visitors to Rome

If I pictured the society of Rome a quarter of a century ago, in the same way I have pictured the Roman countryside, I would be obliged to retouch my portrait; there would no longer be a resemblance. Each generation can be counted as thirty-three years, the life of Christ (Christ is the type for all); the form of each generation in our western world alters. Man is placed in a picture whose framework never changes, but whose figures alter. Rabelais was in this City in 1536 with Cardinal du Bellay; he occupied the position of butler to His Eminence; *he sliced and served*.

Rabelais, changed into Brother *Jean des Entommeures*, did not share Montaigne's opinion, who heard scarcely any bells in Rome and *far fewer than in a French village*, Rabelais on the contrary, heard plenty in the *Echoing Isle* (Rome) *doubting if it were not Dodona with its sounding cauldrons*.

Forty-four years after Rabelais, Montaigne found the banks of the Tiber cultivated, and remarked that on the 16th March there were roses and artichokes in Rome. The churches were bare, without statues of saints, without paintings, less ornate and less beautiful than the churches of France. Montaigne was accustomed to the *sombre vastness of our Gothic cathedrals*; he speaks of St Peter's several times without describing it, insensitive or indifferent to the arts as he seems to be. In the presence of so many masterpieces, no name offers itself to Montaigne's memory; his remembrances tell him nothing of Raphael, or Michelangelo, not yet dead sixteen years.

Moreover ideas about the arts, about the philosophical influence of the geniuses who developed and protected them, were not yet born. Time is for men what space is for monuments; neither can be judged well except from a distance and the viewpoint of perspective; too near and they cannot be seen, too far and they are no longer visible.

The author of the *Essais* only sought ancient Rome in Rome: '*The buildings of that illegitimate Rome:*' he says, '*one sees at this time, attaching their hovels to whatever they still possess of what delights the admiration of our present centuries, makes me recall those nests that the sparrows and crows build on the vaults and walls of churches in France that the Huguenots have recently demolished.*'

What idea did Montaigne have of ancient Rome, if he regarded St. Peter's as a sparrow's nest attached to the Coliseum's wall?

Newly made a citizen of Rome, by an authentic *Bull* of 1581, he remarked that the Roman women did not carry *dominos* or masks like the French: they appeared in public covered with pearls and precious stones, but their *belts were too loose* and they looked *pregnant*. The men wore black, 'and though they were Dukes, Counts and Marquises they *had quite a lowly appearance.*'

Is it not singular that Saint Jerome remarks on the gait of Roman women who make themselves look pregnant: '*solutis geniubus fractus incesse: their feeble gait with swaying knees*'?

Almost every day, when I go out through the Porto Angelica, I see a humble house, quite near the Tiber, with a smoke-blackened French sign representing a bear: it is there that Michel, the Lord of Montaigne,

stayed on his arrival in Rome, not far from the hospital which served as a refuge for that poor madman, *formed of pure and ancient poetry* whom Montaigne visited in his lodge in Ferrara, and who invoked in him *more frustration than compassion* even.

It was a memorable event, when the 17th Century sent its greatest Protestant poet and most profound genius to visit the mighty Catholic Rome in 1638. With her back to the Cross, holding the Testaments in her hands, the guilty generations cast out of Eden behind her, and the redeemed generations descended from the Mount of Olives before her, she said to the heretic born yesterday: *'What do you wish of your ancient mother?'*

Leonora, the Roman girl, enchanted Milton. Has it ever been remarked that Leonora appears at Cardinal Mazarin's concerts in the *Memoirs* of Madame de Motteville?

The passage of time led Abbé Arnould to Rome after Milton. This Abbé, who had borne arms, recounts an anecdote interesting because of the name of one of the people involved, at the same time as it recalls the manner of courtiers then. The hero of the story, the Duc de Guise, grandson of Le Balafre, going in search of his Neapolitan adventure, passed through Rome in 1647: there he met Nina Barcarola. Maison-Blanche, secretary to Monsieur Deshayes, the Ambassador to Constantinople, took it into his head to become a rival to the Duc de Guise. Evil overtook him: they substituted (it was at night in an unlit room) a hideous old woman for Nina. *'If the laughter was great on the one side, the confusion on the other can only be imagined'*, says Arnould. *'Adonis, untangling himself with difficulty from the embraces of his goddess, fled naked from the house as if had the devil at his heels.'*

Cardinal Retz says nothing about Roman manners. I prefer le *petit* Coulanges and his two trips in 1656 and 1689: he celebrates the *vineyards* and *gardens* whose names cast a spell.

In my walks to the Porta Pia I found almost all the people described by Coulanges: the people? No, their grand-sons and grand-daughters!

Madame de Sévigné received poems from Coulanges; she replied from her Château des Rochers in my humble Brittany, thirty miles from Combourg: *'What a sad location I write from compared to yours, my kind cousin! It suits a solitary like me, as Rome does one whose star wanders. How tenderly fate has treated you, as you say, even though she has made you quarrelsome!!!'*

Between Coulanges' first trip to Rome, in 1656, and his second, in 1689, thirty-three years passed; I lost only twenty-five between my first trip to Rome, in 1803, and my second in 1828. If I had known Madame de Sévigné, I would have been cured of the sorrow of ageing.

Spon, Misson, Dumont, and Addison successively followed Coulanges. Spon, and Wheeler his companion, guided me through the ruins of Athens.

It is interesting to read in Dumont of the location of the masterpieces we admire, at the time of his journey in 1690; the Rivers Nile and Tiber, the Antinous, the Cleopatra, the Laocoon and the torso supposed to be of Hercules could be seen in the Belvedere. Dumont places *the bronze peacocks from the tomb of Scipio Africanus* in the Vatican Gardens.

Addison travels as a *scholar*, his journey summarized by classical quotations marked with memories of England; passing through Paris he presented his Latin poems to Monsieur Boileau.

Père Labat followed the author of Cato: he is a strange man this Parisian monk of the Order of Preaching Friars. A missionary to the Antilles, freebooter, able mathematician, architect and soldier, brave artilleryman aiming his cannon like a grenadier, and knowledgeable critic, who regained possession for the inhabitants of Dieppe of their original discoveries in Africa, he had a spirit inclined to raillery and a character inclined to liberty. I know no traveller who gives a more exact or clearer idea of Papal government. Labat covers the ground, goes to the processions, mixes everywhere and pokes fun at almost everything.

The preaching father relates how, in Cadiz, among the Capuchins, he was given bed linen quite new ten years previously, and saw a St. Joseph dressed in Spanish style, sword at his side, hat under his arm, with powdered hair and glasses on his nose. In Rome, he assisted at a Mass: *'I have never,'* he says, *'seen so many castrato musicians together and so large an orchestra. Connoisseurs said they had never heard anything so beautiful. I said the same in order to be thought knowledgeable; but if I had not had the honor to be part of the officiant's procession, I would have left the ceremony which lasted three straight hours at least, and seemed like six to me.'*

The nearer I come to the time in which I am writing the more similar the customs of Rome are to those of today.

From the time of De Broses, Roman women have worn wigs; the custom is ancient: Propertius asks of his *life* (his lover) why she chooses to adorn her hair:

*'Quid juvat ornato procedure, vita, capillo!*

*Why, mea vita, come with your hair adorned?'*

The Gallic women, our ancestors, furnished hair for those Severinas, Piscas, Faustinas, and Sabinas. Velléda says to Eudore speaking of her hair: *'It is my diadem and I cherish it for you.'* A hairstyle was not the Roman's greatest legacy, but it was one of the most durable: people take from women's tombs whole hairpieces which have evaded the scissors of the daughters of the night, and seek in vain the elegant brows they crowned. The perfumed tresses, an object of idolatry to the most fickle of passions, have survived empires; death, that breaks all bonds, could not disturb those fragile nets.

Today the Italian girls wear their own hair, which ordinary women plait with coquettish grace.

The magistrate and traveller De Broses shows, in his portraits and writings, a deceptive resemblance to Voltaire with whom he had a comical dispute regarding a meadow. De Broses often chatted at the bedside of a Princess Borghèse. In 1803, in the Borghèse Palace, I saw another Princess who shone with all her brother's brilliance: Pauline Bonaparte is no more!

If she had lived in the age of Raphael, he would have depicted her as one of those amours that lean on the backs of lions in the Farnesina, and the same languor would have possessed painter and model. How many flowers have perished already in those wastes where I made Jerome, Augustine, Eudore and Cymodocée wander!

De Broses depicts the English on the Piazza de Spagna almost as we see them today, living together, making a great noise, regarding humble humanity as beneath them, and returning to their red-brick hovels in London, having barely cast an eye on the Coliseum. De Broses had the honor of paying court to James III.

*‘Of the Pretender’s two sons,’ he says, ‘the elder is about twenty years old, the younger fifteen. I heard from those who know them well that the elder is nicer, and more deeply kind; that he has a good heart and great courage; that he feels his situation keenly, and that, if he does not escape from it someday, it will not be for lack of daring. I am told that having been taken when very young to the siege of Gaeta, during the Spanish conquest of the Kingdom of Naples, while crossing it his hat fell into the sea. Someone wished to retrieve it: “No,” he said, ‘it is not worth it; it would be better for me to come back and fetch it myself one day.’”*

De Broses thought that if the Prince of Wales attempted anything, he would fail, and he gave his reasons. Returning to Rome after his gallant feats, Charles Edward, who carried the title of Count of Albany, lost his father; he married the Princess of Stolberg-Goedern, and settled in Tuscany. Is it true that he visited London secretly in 1752 and 1761, as Hume relates, that he was present at George III’s coronation, and that he said to someone who recognized him in the crowd: *‘The man who is the object of all that ceremony is him whom I envy least’?*

The Pretender’s marriage was not a happy one; the Countess of Albany separated from him and took up residence in Rome: that was where another traveller, Bonstetten, met her; the gentleman from Bern, in his old age, told me at Geneva that he possessed letters from the Countess of Albany’s youth.

Alfieri met the Pretender’s wife in Florence and loved her for life: *‘Twelve years later,’* he says, *‘at the moment I am writing all these trifles, at the terrible age when there are no more illusions, I feel that I love her more every day, as time destroys the only charm not owing to herself, the brilliance of her passing beauty. My heart is elevated, and is becoming kinder and gentler because of her, and I dare to say the same thing of her, that I sustain and strengthen her.’*

I knew Madame d’Albany in Florence; age appeared to produce in her an opposite effect to that usually produced: time ennobled her face and, as it is itself of the ancient race, it imprints something of that race on the brow it touches: the Countess of Albany, with her thick-waist, and expressionless face, had a common air. If the women from Rubens’ paintings were to grow old they would resemble Madame d’Albany at the age when I encountered her. I am sad that her heart, strengthened and sustained by Alfieri, needed another prop. I will reproduce here a passage from my letter on Rome to Monsieur Fontanes:

*‘Do you know that I only saw Count Alfieri once in my life, and can you guess how? I saw him laid on his bier: I was told he looked almost unchanged; his physiognomy seemed noble and grave to me; death doubtless added fresh severity; the coffin being a little too short, the dead man’s head was bowed on his chest, which made him make a tremendous lurch.’*

Nothing is as sad as re-reading what one has written in one’s youth towards the end of one’s life: all that was present is now past.



In 1803, in Rome, I glimpsed the Cardinal-Duke of York, Henry IX, last of the Stuarts, aged seventy-eight. He had been weak enough to accept a pension from George III; Charles I's widow solicited one from Cromwell in vain. So, the race of Stuarts was extinguished a hundred and eighteen years after losing that throne which it never recovered. Three Pretenders passed on, in exile, the shadow of a crown: they had the intellect and courage; what was it they lacked: the hand of God.

As for the rest, the Stuarts consoled themselves with the sight of Rome; they were merely one trivial incident the more among its mounds of rubble, a little broken column, erected in the midst of a vast network of ruins. Their race, as it vanished from the world, had one other reason for solace: it saw the old Europe fall, the fatality attached to the Stuarts brought other kings down to the dust with them, among whom was Louis XVI, whose grandfather refused sanctuary to Charles I's descendant, while Charles X died in exile at almost the same age as the Duke of York, and his son and grandson are wandering the earth!

Lalande's *Travels in Italy in 1765 and 1766* is still the best and most exact work regarding artistic Rome and ancient Rome. 'I love to read the historians and the poets,' he writes, 'but one will never read them with more pleasure than while walking the earth on which they trod, wandering the hills they described, and watching the rivers they sung of flowing by.' Not too bad for an astronomer who lived on spiders.

Duclos, almost as emaciated as Lalande, made this fine comment: 'The theatrical works of different nations are a true reflection of their manners. Harlequin, the manservant and principal character in Italian comedies, is always represented as famished, which arises from their habitual state of poverty. Our servants in comedy are commonly drunk, from which they may be supposed villainous but not wretched.'

The declamatory admiration of Dupaty offers little compensation for the dryness of Duclos and Lalande, yet it invokes the presence of Rome; one sees on reflection that his eloquence of descriptive style is born from Rousseau's inspiration, *spiraculum vitae: the breath of life*. Dupaty partook of that new school which quickly substituted the sentimental, obscure and mannered for the truth, clarity and naturalness of Voltaire. However, through the medium of his affected jargon, Dupaty reveals careful observation: he explains the patience of the Roman people by the age of their successive sovereigns. 'A Pope,' he says, 'is always for them a dying king.'

At the Villa Borghèse, Dupaty watched night falling: 'Only a single ray of sunlight was left which died on Venus' brow.' Could the poets of today do better? He took leave of Tivoli: 'Adieu, little valley! I am a stranger; I do not live in your lovely Italy. I will never see you again; but perhaps my children or some of my children will pay you a visit one day: be as delightful for them as you have been for their father.' One of those children of the erudite poet visited Rome, and he would have been able to see the last ray of daylight die on the brow of Dupaty's *Venus genetrix*.

Dupaty had scarcely left Italy before Goethe arrived to replace him. Had the President of the Bordeaux Parliament ever heard of Goethe? Nevertheless Goethe's name lives while that of Dupaty has almost vanished. It is not that I have any love for Germany's powerful genius; I have little sympathy for the materialistic poet: I feel Schiller, I hear Goethe. That there is great beauty in the enthusiasm Goethe experiences for Jupiter in Rome, excellent critics so judge, but I prefer the God of the Cross to the God of

Olympus. I search in vain for the author of Werther along the banks of the Tiber; I only find him in this phrase: *'My present life is like a youthful dream; we will see if I am destined to enjoy it or to recognize that it is vain as so much else has been.'*

*When Napoleon's eagle allowed Rome to escape its clutches, it fell back into the arms of its peaceful shepherds: then Byron appeared within the crumbling walls of the Caesars: he has cast his sorrowful imagination over so many ruins, like a mourning cloak. Rome! You had one name, he gave you another; that name remains yours: he called you: 'The Niobe of nations! There she stands, childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe; an empty urn within her withered hands, whose holy dust was scattered long ago'*

After a last surge of poetry, Byron did not wait to die. I might have seen Byron at Geneva, and did not; I might have seen Goethe in Weimar, and did not; but I have seen Madame de Staël die, who disdaining to live beyond her youth, passed rapidly to the Capitol with Corinne: imperishable names, illustrious ashes, which are linked to the name and ashes of the Eternal City. (I invite the reader to view two articles by Monsieur Ampère in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, of the 1st and 15th of July 1835, entitled *Portraits of Rome in various Ages*. These interesting documents will complete a picture of which the above is merely a sketch. Note: Paris, 1837)

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 8

#### The present mode of life in Rome

Thus the changes of manner and person have altered in Italy from century to century; but above all the major transformation has come about because of our dual concern with Rome.

The *Roman Republic*, established under the Directory's influence, ridiculous as it was with its two *consuls* and its *lictors* (vicious *facchini*, scoundrels, picked from the crowd), happily only left its innovatory imprint on the civil law: it was from the prefectures, dreamt up by that *Roman Republic*, that Bonaparte borrowed his institution of prefects.

We brought Rome the seeds of an administration that did not exist; Rome, as the center of the new Tiber department, was ruled more effectively. It acquired its system of loans and mortgages from us. The suppression of monasteries, the sale of ecclesiastical properties sanctioned by Pius VI, weakened belief in the permanence of the consecration of things religious. That famous *index*, which had some effect on our side of the Alps, achieved nothing in Rome: for a few *bajocchi*, a few *sous* that is, you could obtain permission to read the forbidden work, with a safe conscience. The *index* is one of a number of things which remain as a witness in the present to ancient times. In the Roman Republic, in Athens, were not the title of *King* and the names of great families supporting the monarchy, respectfully preserved? It was only the French who raged furiously against their tombs and annals, who pulled down crosses, devastated churches, in their vindictiveness towards the clergy of the years of grace 1000 or 1100. Nothing more stupid and puerile than those outrages inflicted on their heritage; nothing leads one to believe more that we are incapable of whatever is serious, that among us the true principles of liberty are always misunderstood. Rather than despising the past, we ought to treat it, as other nations do, as a venerable old man who seated by our fireside recounts what he has seen: what harm can he do us? He instructs us and entertains us with his writings, his ideas, his language, his manners, his customs of another age; but he is powerless, and his hands are weak and trembling. Should we be afraid of this contemporary of our ancestors, who would already be with them in the grave if he were able to die, and who has no more authority than their ashes?

The French passing through Rome established their principles there: it is what always happens when the conquest is achieved by a nation more advanced in civilization than the nation which is conquered, witness the Greeks in Asia under Alexander, as the French in Europe under Napoleon. Bonaparte, by snatching sons from their mothers, by forcing the Italian nobility to leave their palaces and bear arms, hastened a transformation of the national spirit.

As for the physiognomy of Roman society, on days when there are concerts and balls you might think yourself in Paris: the same dress, the same taste, and the same habits. The Altieri, Palestrina, Zagarola, Del Drago, Lante, Lozzano, etc., would not be out of place in the salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain: though some of these ladies have a somewhat nervous manner which I think is due to the climate. The delightful Falconieri, for example, always sits near the door, ready to flee to Mount Mario, if one should look at her: the Villa Mellini is hers; a novel set in that deserted house, beneath its cypress trees, would be worth something.

But, whatever changes of manners and persons have taken place in Italy over the centuries one notices there a habitual grandeur, which the rest of us, petty barbarians, cannot approach. There is still Roman blood in Rome and the tradition of world mastery. When one sees foreigners crammed into tiny newly-built houses by the Porto del Popolo, or sheltering in palaces divided into apartments and pierced with chimneys, they look like rats scrabbling at the feet of monuments by Apollodorus or Michelangelo, and gnawing holes in the pyramids.

Today the noble Romans, ruined by the Revolution, stay in their palaces, live parsimoniously and have become their own business managers. When one has the good fortune (which is quite rare) to be admitted to their houses in the evening, one traverses vast marble halls, barely lit, along the length of which antique statues show white in the dense shadows, like phantoms or exhumed corpses. At the far end of these rooms, the threadbare lackey who is leading you shows you into a kind of gynaecium: around a table are seated three or four old ladies or badly-dressed young ladies, working in the lamplight at their embroidery exchanging a few words with a father, brother, or a husband reclining obscurely in the sanctuary of a ragged armchair. Yet there is something fine, regal, clinging to the noble race, in that gathering which has taken refuge behind the masterpieces and which you at first take for a religious meeting. The race of *cavalier servantes* is finished, though there are still priests bearing shawls and foot-warmers; here and there a Cardinal is still established in a lady's house like a sofa.

Nepotism and scandalous behavior among the pontiffs is no longer possible, as kings can no longer have titled and honored mistresses. Now that politics and tragic love affairs have ceased to fulfil the lives of the great ladies of Rome, how do they spend their time in the depths of their households? It would be interesting to penetrate fully their new way of life: if I remain in Rome, I will occupy myself with doing so.

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 9

#### Surroundings and countryside

I visited Tivoli on the 10th of December 1803: at that time I wrote a narrative which was later printed: *'This place is suited to reflection and reverie; I review my past life; I feel the weight of the present, I seek to penetrate my future: where will I be, what will I be doing and what will I be twenty years from now?'*

Twenty years! It seems like a century; I thought I would be in my grave before that century had ended. And it is not I who has vanished, but the master of the world and his empire that have fled!

Almost all the ancient and modern travellers only saw in the Roman Campagna what they term its horror and its bareness. Montaigne himself, who was certainly not lacking in imagination, says: *'Far to our left we had the Apennines, and a view of an unpleasant countryside, uneven, full of cracks...the region bare, tree-less, mostly uncultivated.'*

The Protestant Milton cast an eye over the Campagna that was as cold and severe as his faith. Lalande and the President des Brosses were as blind as Milton.

Only in Monsieur de Bonstetten's *Travels over the landscape of the last six books of the Aeneid*, published in Geneva in 1804, less than a year after my letter to Monsieur de Fontanes (printed in *Le Mercure* in the spring), will one find the true feelings engendered by that wonderful solitude, yet still mixed with objurgation: *'How delightful to read Virgil under the skies of Aeneas, and, so to speak, in the presence of Homer's gods!'* says Monsieur Bonstetten; *'What a profound solitude there is in those wastes, where one sees only the sea, neglected woods, fields, wide meadows, and never an inhabitant! In a vast extent of countryside I saw only a single house, and that was nearby, on the crest of a hill. I went there, it lacked a door; I climbed the stairs, I entered a kind of bedroom, a bird of prey had made its nest there...'*

*I spent some time at the window of that abandoned house. I saw at my feet that coast, so rich and magnificent in Pliny's day, now un-cultivated.'*

After my own descriptions of the Roman countryside, people passed from denigration to enthusiasm. The English and French travellers who followed me noted every step from Storta to Rome with ecstasy. Monsieur de Tournon, in his *Statistical Studies*, pursues the path of admiration which I had the good fortune to throw open: *'The Roman countryside,'* he says, *'reveals more distinctly at every step the grave beauty of its vast lines and numerous levels, and its lovely mountainous surroundings. Its unvarying grandeur impresses and elevates the mind.'*

I have not mentioned Monsieur Simond, whose travels seem an affront, and who delights in viewing Rome aslant. I was in Geneva when he died quite suddenly. A farmer, he had just cut his hay and joyously reaped his first harvest and now he has gone to join his mown grass and his threshed crop.

We have several letters of the great landscape painters; Poussin and Claude Lorrain say nothing about the Roman countryside. But if their pen was silent, the brush spoke volumes; the *agro romano* (countryside of Rome) was a mysterious source of beauty, on which they drew, concealing themselves there by a kind

of avarice of genius, and as if afraid lest the vulgar profane it. A strange thing, that French eyes best captured the Italian light.

I have re-read my letter to Monsieur de Fontanes on Rome, written twenty-five years ago, and I confess that I find it so exact that it would be impossible for me shorten it or add a word. A foreign company has, just this winter (1829), proposed to clear the Roman Campagna for cultivation; ah, gentlemen, thank you for your cottages and English gardens on the Janiculum! If you were ever to disturb the fallows where Cincinnatus' ploughshare was broken, and over which the grasses of the centuries have bowed, I would flee Rome never to return. Go and drag your perfected ploughs elsewhere; here the earth yields and can only yield graves. The Cardinals closed their ears to the calculations of the Black Bands rushing to demolish the ruins of Tusculum which they took for aristocrats' houses: they would have made whitewash with the marble of the sarcophagi of Emilius Paulus, as they have made gargoyles of the lead in our ancestors' coffins. The Sacred College holds to the past; moreover it has been shown, to the great confusion of the economists that the Roman countryside returns five per cent to its owners as pasture and only brings in one and a half from wheat. It is not from laziness, but positive gain, that the cultivators of the plains give preference to *la pastorizia* (pasture) over *li maggesi* (cultivation). The revenue per hectare in the vicinity of Rome equals that of the most fertile French departments: to convince oneself of that, it is enough to read the work of Monsignor Nicolai.

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 10

#### A letter to Monsieur Villemain

I have said that at first I experienced boredom at the start of my second trip to Rome and that I ended by bringing myself back to the ruins and the sunlight: I was still under the influence of my first impressions when, on the 3rd of November 1828, I replied to Monsieur Villemain:

*‘Your letter, Sir, has reached my solitude in Rome at just the right moment: it has subdued the homesickness that I am feeling so intensely. The sickness is nothing more than age which prevents my eyes seeing as they once saw; my ruin is not great enough to solace itself with that of Rome. When I walk alone at present in the midst of all this debris of the centuries, it merely serves me for a scale on which to measure time; I return to the past, I see what I have lost and the end of that short future I have before me; I consider all the delights that might remain to me, and find none. I return home to endure myself, oppressed by the sirocco or pierced by the tramontane. My whole life is there beside a tomb which I have not yet found the courage to visit. They give the crumbling monuments a deal of care; they prop them up; they clear them of their plants and flowers; the women I left behind when young are old now, and the ruins look younger: what am I doing here?*

*And, Sir, I assure you that I only aspire to return to the Rue d’Enfer in order to leave it no more. I have fulfilled my whole duty to my country and my friends. Once you are in the Council, with Monsieur Bertin de Vaux, I will have nothing more to ask, since your talents will soon take you higher. My withdrawal has contributed somewhat, I hope, to the cessation of any formidable opposition; public liberty is ensured forever in France. My sacrifice should now end with my role. I ask nothing but to return to my Infirmary. I have only praise for this country: I have received a wonderful welcome; I find a government full of tolerance and well aware of events outside Italy, but in the end nothing would please me more than the idea of disappearing completely from the world scene: it is good to be preceded to the grave by the silence that one will find there.*

*I thank you for having wished to speak to me of your work. You will create an output worthy of you which will add to your fame. If you have any research to do here, be good enough to indicate it to me: a trawl through the Vatican may discover riches for you. Alas, I think of poor Monsieur Thierry only too often! I assure you that I am haunted by memory of him; so young, so full of the love of his work, and yet fading away! And, as he always achieves real merit, his mind was improving, and reason in him was taking the place of system: I still hope for a miracle. I have written after him; no one has replied at all. I have been happier about yourself, and a letter from Monsieur de Martignac leads me at last to hope that justice, though late and incomplete, will be done you. I only look to my friends now, Sir; you will permit me to include you in the number of those who remain to me. I remain, Sir, with as much sincerity as admiration, your most devoted servant.*

CHATEAUBRIAND’

(God be thanked, Monsieur Thierry has revived and taken up his fine and important work with new vigor; he works at night, but like a chrysalis: ‘The nymph with joy itself encloses, within its tomb of silk and gold, which to all eyes in turn itself discloses’).

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 11

A letter to Madame Récamier

*‘Rome, Saturday the 8th of November 1828.*

*Monsieur de La Ferronnays tells me of the surrender of Varna which I already knew. I think I have said to you before that the whole question rested on the fall of that place, and that the Grand Turk would not have considered making peace unless the Russians did what they had failed to do in their previous wars. Our newspapers have been quite wretchedly pro-Turkish in recent days. How could they ever forget Greece’s noble cause, and bow in admiration before barbarians who spread slavery and pestilence in that country of great men, and in the best part of Europe? Behold what we are, we French; a little personal discomfort makes us forget our principles and most generous feelings. The Turks in defeat might arouse a little of my pity; the Turks as conquerors fill me with horror.*

*So my friend Monsieur de La Ferronnays remains in power. I flatter myself that my determination to support him has deterred the candidates for his portfolio. But I must leave here at last; I only aspire to re-enter my solitude and leave the political life. I thirst for freedom in my later years. New generations have arisen: they will find the public freedoms established that I fought so hard for; let them grasp them then, but let them not misuse my bequest, and let me die in peace beside you.*

*The day before yesterday I went for a walk to the Villa Panfilì: the lovely solitude!’*

*‘Rome, Saturday the 15th of November 1828.*

*The first ball has been given at Torlonia’s. There I met all the English in the world. I thought I was Ambassador in London. The English appear like extras engaged to dance the winter away in Paris, Milan, Rome and Naples, who will return to London when their engagement expires in the spring. This skipping about in the ruins of the Capitol, and the uniform way of life that high society adopts everywhere, are very strange things: if I only had the resource to save myself in the wastes of Rome!*

*What is truly deplorable here, what jars with the nature of the place, is this multitude of insipid English, frivolous dandies who, linking arms with one another as bats do their wings, promenade their oddity, their boredom, their insolence, at your festivities, and establish themselves in your residence as if it were an inn. This swaggering, vagabond Britain, usurps your place, and spurs with you to drive you off, during public solemnities: every day it gulps in haste pictures and ruins, while doing full honors to the cakes and ices at your soirées. I do not know how an Ambassador can endure these gross guests and not show them the door.’*



## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 12

An explanation of the *Memoir* you are about to read

In my *Congress of Verona* I have spoken of the existence of my *Memoir* on the Orient. When I sent it from Rome, in 1828, to Monsieur le Comte de la Ferronnays, then Foreign Minister, the world was not as it is now; in France, the Legitimacy still existed; Poland had not vanished into Russia; Spain was still Bourbon; England had not yet the honor of defending us. Many things in this *Memoir* have thus become dated: today my foreign policy, in its several relations, would not be the same; twelve years have changed diplomatic affairs, but their essential reality remains. I have inserted this *Memoir* in its entirety, to counter once more on behalf of the Restoration the absurd reproaches that people insist in heaping on it despite the factual evidence. The Restoration, as soon as it had appointed Ministers from amongst its supporters, never ceased to occupy itself with the honor and independence of France: it spoke out against the Treaty of Vienna, it reclaimed its defensive frontiers, not in order vaingloriously to extend its borders to the Rhine, but seeking security; it smiled when they spoke of European equilibrium, an equilibrium so unjustly tilted against it: that is why it desired, first of all, to cover itself in the south, since they had been pleased to disarm it in the north. At Navarino it regained a navy and the freedom of Greece; the question of the Orient has not taken it unawares.

I have maintained my opinions regarding the Orient, in three respects, since the period when I wrote this *Memoir*:

1. If European Turkey is to be parceled out, we must have a share in the division by an increase in territory on our borders and by the possession of some military station in the Archipelago. To compare the partition of Turkey to the partition of Poland is an absurdity.
2. To treat Turkey as if we were in the reign of Francis I, as a power helpful to our policy, is to forget three centuries of history.
3. To attempt to civilize Turkey by giving her steamships and railroads, disciplining her army, and teaching her how to carry out fleet maneuvers, is to fail to understand civilization in the orient, and to introduce barbarism to the West: future Ibrahims could take us back to the age of Charles Martel, or that of the Siege of Vienna, when Europe was saved by that heroic Poland on which the ingratitude of kings weighs hard.

I must remark that I was the only person, apart from Benjamin Constant, to signal the lack of foresight of the Christian governments: a nation whose social structure is founded on slavery and polygamy is a nation that needs to be dispatched to the Mongolian Steppes.

In the final result, European Turkey, which has become a vassal of Russia in virtue of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, no longer exists: if the question needs to be resolved immediately, which I doubt, it would probably be better that an independent Empire had its seat in Constantinople, and was one with Greece. Is that possible? I do not know. As for Mehemet Ali, that pitiless tax and customs officer, Egypt, in the interests of France, is better in his keeping than it would be in that of the English.

But I am trying hard to demonstrate the honorable intentions of the Restoration; ah, who worries over what it has done, above all who will worry in a few years' time? I might as well have been exerting myself in the interests of Tyre or Ecbatana: that past world is no more and will be no more. After Alexander, Roman power began; after Caesar, Christianity changed the world; after Charlemagne, feudal night engendered a new society; after Napoleon, nothing: there is no sign of a coming empire, or religion, or even the barbarians. Civilization has reached its highest point, but a materialistic barren civilization, which can produce nothing, since one can only create life through morality; one can only forge nations by Heavenly means: railroads only carry us more swiftly towards the abyss.

These are the preliminaries that seem necessary to me in order to aid understanding of the *Memoir* which follows here, but can equally be found in the archives of the Foreign Ministry.

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 13

#### Memoir

#### *LETTER TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE DE LA FERRONAYS*

*‘Rome, this 30th of November 1828.*

*My noble friend, in your private letter of the 10th of November, you said:*

*“I send you a short summary of our political situation, be kind enough to let me know your thoughts in return, which are always so useful to know in like matters.”*

*Your friendship, noble Count, is too indulgent towards me; I doubt I will enlighten you at all in sending you the memoir below: I simply obey your orders.’*

#### MEMOIR

#### PART I

*‘At the distance I am from the theatre of action, and finding myself in almost total ignorance of the state of negotiations, I am scarcely in a position to judge appropriately. Nevertheless, since I have long-settled ideas regarding France’s internal politics, and as I have so to speak been the first to call for the emancipation of Greece, I willingly submit my ideas to your consideration, noble Count.*

*There was no question yet of the treaty of the 6th of July when I published my Note on Greece. That Note contained the seeds of the treaty; I proposed to the five great European powers that they send a collective dispatch to the Divan to demand the immediate cessation of hostilities between the Porte and the Hellenes. In the event of a refusal, the five powers would have declared that they recognized the independence of the Greek government, and that they would establish diplomatic ties with that government.*

*The Note was read in various cabinet offices. The place I have occupied as Foreign Minister gave my views some value: and one noteworthy thing was that Prince von Metternich appeared less hostile to the spirit of my Note than Mr. Canning.*

*The latter, with whom I had enjoyed warm relations, was more of an orator than a great politician, more man of talent than statesman. He was generally jealous of success and especially that of France. When the parliamentary opposition wounded or elevated his self-esteem, he precipitated unnecessary action, and overflowed with sarcasm and boastfulness. Thus after the war in Spain, he rejected the request for intervention that I had wrung so painfully from the Madrid government in order to sort out affairs abroad: his private reason was that the request had not been made by himself, and he simply wished it seen that according to his own system of ideas (if indeed he had one), England represented in a general congress could in no way be bound by the acts of that congress and would always remain free to act independently. It was thus that he, Mr. Canning, sent troops into Portugal, not to defend a charter which he was the first to ridicule, but because the Opposition reproached him for the presence of our soldiers in Spain, and he wished to be able to tell Parliament that an English army occupied Lisbon as*

the French army occupied Cadiz. Thus he ultimately signed the treaty of the 6th of July, which was unfavorable to the Greek cause, against his better judgement, against his own country's judgement. If he agreed to the treaty, it was solely because he feared us taking the initiative with Russia over the issue and reaping the sole glory for a generous decision. The Minister, who after all will leave a great name behind him, also thought by the same treaty to hinder Russian freedom of movement; however it is clear that the actual text in no way bound Emperor Nicholas, and did not oblige him to specifically renounce war with Turkey.

The treaty of the 6th of July is a shapeless thing, brokered in haste, in which nothing is foreseen, and which seethes with contradictory agreements.

In my Note on Greece, I presupposed the solidarity of the five great powers; Austria and Prussia being separately united, their neutrality left them free, according to events, to declare themselves for or against one of the belligerent parties.

It is not a question of returning to the past, but of grasping things as they are. All that the governments were obliged to do was to take the best course of action as events unfolded. Let us examine those events.

We occupy the Morea, the strategic positions in that peninsula fall into our hands: thus for what concerns us.

Varna is taken: Varna becomes an outpost three days march from Constantinople. The Dardanelles are blockaded; the Russians seize Silistria in the winter and several other fortresses; numerous recruits will arrive. In the first days of spring, they set out on a decisive campaign; in Asia, General Paskevich invades three Pashalics (jurisdictions of the Pashas), he commands the sources of the Euphrates and threatens the route to Erzerum: thus for what concerns Russia.

Would the Emperor Nicholas have been better undertaking a winter campaign in Europe? I think so, if that was possible. By marching on Constantinople, he would have cut the Gordian knot, he would have put an end to the diplomatic intrigue; one sets oneself on the side of success; the means of winning allies, is to conquer.

As for Turkey, it is obvious to me that we would have had to declare war if the Russians had failed to take Varna. Will she have the good sense now to enter into negotiations with England and France to at least relieve herself of both? Austria willingly invites her to take that course; but it is quite difficult to foresee how a race of men lacking European concepts will conduct themselves. At the same time cunning as slaves and proud as tyrants, anger among them is never tempered by fear. Sultan Mahmud II, by all accounts, appears to be a superior Prince among recent Sultans; he has shown obvious political courage; but has he personal courage? He is content to conduct reviews in the streets of his capital, and is beseeched by the great not to travel even as far as Adrianople. The populace of Constantinople would be better pleased by triumphs than by the presence of its master.

Let us assume however that the Divan consents to talks on the basis of the treaty of the 6th of July. The negotiations will be quite thorny; when they have established the borders of Greece that is not the end. Where will the borders be set on the continent? How many islands are to be liberated? Will Samos, which has so valiantly defended its independence, be abandoned? Let us go further, let us suppose the

*conference is established: will it paralyze Emperor Nicholas' armies? While the plenipotentiaries of Turkey and the three allied powers negotiate in the Archipelago, every invading step taken by the troops in Bulgaria will alter the state of affairs. If the Russians were to be repulsed, the Turks would break up the conference; if the Russians reach the gates of Constantinople, it would augur well for the freedom of the Morea! The Hellenes would have no need of protectors or negotiators.*

*So, to lead the Divan to occupy itself with the treaty of the 6th of July is to retreat from the difficulty, and not resolve it. The simultaneity of the emancipation of Greece and the signature of the peace treaty between the Turks and the Russians is, in my opinion, necessary to extract the governments of Europe from the embarrassment in which they find themselves.*

*What conditions will Emperor Nicholas set for peace?*

*In his manifesto, he declares that he renounces his conquests, but he speaks of indemnities for the costs of the war; that is vague and could lead anywhere.*

*Will the St. Petersburg cabinet, in setting out to regularize the treaties of Akerman and Jassi, not demand firstly the complete independence of the principalities, secondly freedom of commerce in the Black Sea, as much for the Russian nation's benefit as for others, and thirdly the reimbursement of the sums expended in the recent campaign?*

*Innumerable difficulties present themselves if peace is concluded on such a basis.*

*If Russia wishes to grant the principalities sovereigns of its choice, Austria will regard Moldavia and Walachia as Russian provinces, and will be opposed to that political transaction.*

*Will Moldavia and Walachia pass into the hands of an independent Prince with complete powers, or a Prince installed under the protectorate of several sovereigns?*

*In that case, Nicholas would prefer Hospodars (Governors of Wallachia and Moldavia) nominated by Mahmud, since the principalities, not ceasing to be Turkish, would remain vulnerable to Russian arms.*

*The freedom of commerce in the Black Sea, the opening of that sea to all the fleets of Europe and America, would shake the power of the Porte to its foundations. To grant the access of warships to the waters near Constantinople, is, with respect to the geography of the Ottoman Empire, as if one were to recognize the right of foreign armies to pass beneath the walls of Paris at any time.*

*Finally, where will Turkey get the means to pay the expenses of the campaign? The supposed treasure of the Sultans is an old fable. The provinces conquered beyond the Caucasus might, it is true, be ceded, as mortgaged to the amount demanded: of the two Russian armies, the one in Europe, seems to me to be charged with Nicholas' affairs of honor; the other, in Asia, with his pecuniary interests. But if Nicholas does not consider himself bound by the declarations in his manifesto, will not England view Muscovite soldiers advancing on the road to India with a different eye? Has she not already taken fright, when in 1827, they made a further advance into the Persian Empire?*

*If the twin difficulties, which arise both from the actions in train, and the relevant conditions required of a peace between Turkey and Russia; if those twin difficulties render useless the tentative efforts to overcome so many obstacles; if a second campaign is opened in the spring, will the European*

*powers take part in the quarrel? What role should France play? That is what I will consider in the second part of this Note.'*

## PART 2

*'Austria and England have common interests; they are natural allies in foreign policy, however different their forms of government may be otherwise and however opposite their principles of internal government. Both are enemies of, and jealous of, Russia, both desire to halt the advance of that power; in an extreme situation they may well unite; but they feel that if Russia will not accept imposition, she can defy such a union which is more formidable in appearance than reality.*

*Austria has nothing to ask of England; the latter in turn is no use to Austria except to provide her with funds. Now, England, crushed by her weight of debt, has no funds to lend to anyone. Abandoned to her own resources, Austria cannot, given the present state of her finances, launch any military action, especially with her obligation to police Italy and remain on watch on the borders of Poland and Prussia. The present position of the Russian troops would allow them to enter Vienna more swiftly than Constantinople.*

*What could England do against Russia? Close the Baltic, stop buying hemp and timber in the northern markets, destroy Admiral Heyden's fleet in the Mediterranean, land engineers and soldiers at Constantinople, transport to that capital military provisions and munitions, penetrate the Black Sea, blockade the Crimean ports, and deprive the Russian troops in the field of the assistance of their merchant and naval fleets?*

*Let us suppose all that is done (which it cannot be without a vast initial expenditure that would not be compensated or underwritten); Nicholas would still have his immense army of ground troops. An attack by Austria or England against the Cross and in support of the Crescent would increase the popularity of a war already deemed national and religious in Russia. Wars of that nature are fought without money; they are those which, through the force of public opinion, pit nations against one another. Let the Church Fathers once start to evangelize in St. Petersburg as the Ulemas (Muslim scholars) Islamize in Constantinople, and they will find only too many soldiers; they would have more chance of success than their adversaries in that appeal to the passions and beliefs of men. The invasions which pass from north to south are more rapid and far more irresistible than those which gravitate from south to north: the population pressures incline them to flow towards the better climate.*

*Would Prussia remain an indifferent spectator of this great struggle, if Austria and England declared for Turkey? There is no way that could be.*

*Certainly a party exists in the Berlin government that hates and fears the government in St. Petersburg; but that party, which anyway is beginning to age, finds the anti-Austrian party an obstacle and above all the social ties.*

*The bonds of family, normally fragile between sovereigns, are very strong in the Prussian Royal family: King Frederick-William III tenderly loves his daughter, the Empress of Russia, and likes to think that his grandson will mount Peter the Great's throne; the Princes Frederick, William, Charles and Henry Albert, are also very attached to their sister Alexandra; the Prince Royal had no difficulty latterly in Rome in declaring himself hostile to the Turks.*

*In analyzing the various interests thus, one can see that France is in an admirable position politically: she can act as the arbiter in this great debate; she can as she wishes maintain her neutrality or declare for one of the parties, according to time and circumstance. If she were ever obliged to countenance that extremity, if her advice was ignored, if the nobility and moderation of her conduct could not secure the peace she desired for herself and others; in the event that she found herself taking up arms, all her interests would lead her to side with Russia.*

*Let an alliance be established between Austria and England against Russia, what benefit can France gather from joining that alliance?*

*Will England lend France ships?*

*France is still, after England, the premier maritime power in Europe; she has more ships than she needs to destroy, if necessary, the Russian naval forces.*

*Will England provide us with subsidies?*

*England has no funds; France has more than she does, and France has no need to be in the pay of the British government.*

*Will England assist us with soldiers and weapons?*

*France has no lack of weapons, still less of soldiers.*

*Will England guarantee us an expansion of our island or continental territories?*

*Where could we acquire that expansion, if we made war on Russia, to the benefit of the Grand Turk? Will we attempt to swoop on the coasts of the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea or the Bering Strait? Is there any other prospect? Should we consider attaching ourselves to England in order that she might hasten to our aid if ever our internal affairs became tangled?*

*God preserve us from such a prospect and from foreign intervention in our domestic affairs! England, moreover, has always put little store by kings and the freedom of nations; she is always ready to sacrifice monarchies or republics to her own specific interests, without regret. Not long ago, she proclaimed the independence of the Spanish colonies, at the same time as she refused to recognize that of Greece: she sent her fleet to support the Mexican insurgents, and held back on the Thames several humble steamboats destined for the Hellenes; she admitted the legitimacy of Mahmud's rights, and denied those rights to Ferdinand; devoted in turn to despotism or democracy according to the wind that blows the ships of City merchants to her ports.*

*Finally, in associating ourselves with the military plans of England or Austria against Russia, where shall we go to meet our former adversary at Austerlitz? He is not on our borders. Shall we then send a hundred thousand well-equipped men at our cost, to assist at Vienna or Constantinople? Should we maintain an army at Athens to protect the Greeks from the Turks, and an Army at Adrianople to protect the Turks from the Russians? Shall we bombard the Ottomans in the Morea, and embrace them in the Dardanelles? What is devoid of common sense never succeeds in human affairs.*

*Let us nevertheless, despite all likelihood, assume that our efforts were crowned with complete success in that unnatural triple alliance, let us suppose that Prussia remained neutral during all disturbances, with Holland, and that, freed of committing forces there, we were not obliged to fight a hundred and eighty miles from Paris: well, what profit might we gather from our crusade for the deliverance of the tomb of Mahomet? Knights of the Turk we would return from the Levant in a cloak of honor; we would have the glory of having sacrificed a billion in money, and two hundred thousand men, to calm Austria's terrors, satisfy England's jealousies, and in the best part of the world retain the pestilence and barbarism owing to the Ottoman Empire. Austria would perhaps have expanded its territory on the borders with Walachia and Moldavia, and England would perhaps have gained commercial privileges from the Porte, privileges of little interest to us if we participate in them, since we have neither the same size of merchant navy as the English, nor the same manufacturing output to trade in the Levant. We would be the complete dupes of that triple alliance which might fail in its objective, and which, if it succeeded, would only attain it at our expense.*

*But if England has no obvious means of benefiting us, would she not at least act on the government in Vienna, and commit Austria, in compensation for the sacrifices we had made for her, to our regaining the former departments situated on the left bank of the Rhine?*

*No: Austria and England will always oppose equivalent concessions; Russia alone can achieve them for us, as we will see later. Austria detests us and is terrified of us, even more than she hates and dreads Russia; worse still, she would prefer that the latter power acquired territory in Bulgaria, than France in Bavaria.*

*But would not the freedom of Europe be threatened if the Tsars made Constantinople the capital of their Empire?*

*You must explain what you intend by the freedom of Europe: do you mean that, all equilibrium being destroyed, Russia, after having conquered European Turkey, would seize Austria, subjugate Germany and Prussia, and finish by enslaving France?*

*Firstly, every Empire which extends itself endlessly loses its vigor; almost always it divides; one would soon see two or three Russias, each an enemy of the others.*

*Then, does the balance of Europe exist for France since the recent treaties?*

*England has retained almost all the colonial conquests that she made in three quarters of the world during the Revolutionary War; in Europe she acquired Malta and the Ionian islands; it is not only by her Electorate of Hanover that she has expanded her Royalty and increased her Lordship.*

*Austria has added to her possessions with a third of Poland and slices of Bavaria, part of Dalmatia, and Italy. She no longer has Holland, true; but that province has not devolved on France, and has become a redoubtable ally of England and Prussia against us.*

*Prussia has gained the Duchy or Palatinate of Poznan, a fragment of Saxony and the Principal circles of the Rhine; her outposts are on our own territory, ten days march from our capital.*

*Russia has regained Finland and is established on the banks of the Vistula.*



*And we, what have we gained from these divisions? We have been despoiled of our colonies; not even our ancient soil has been respected. Landau separated from France, Huningue sliced away, leaving a gap of more than a hundred and fifty miles in our frontier; the little State of Sardinia found no shame in donning the stolen tatters of Napoleon's Empire and Louis XIV's kingdom.*

*In this situation, what interest do we have in reassuring Austria and England about Russian victories? If the latter were to expand towards the Orient and alarm the government in Vienna, would we be in danger? Have they been so gentle with us, that we should be so sensitive to our enemies' anxieties? England and Austria have always been and will always be France's natural adversaries; we will see them tomorrow wholehearted allies of Russia, if it is a question of fighting and despoiling us.*

*Let us not forget that, while we were taking up arms with the intention of saving Europe, put in peril by Nicholas' supposed ambitions, Austria, less chivalrous and more rapacious, would probably listen to the St Petersburg government's proposals: a brisk change of policy would cost them little. With Russia's consent, she would seize Bosnia and Serbia, leaving us the satisfaction of wearing ourselves out on behalf of Mahmud.*

*France is already in a state of partial hostility against the Turks; she alone has already spent several millions and risked twenty thousand soldiers in the cause of Greece; England would only lose a few words betraying the principles of the treaty of the 6th of July; France would lose honor, men and money: our expedition would be nothing less than true political disaster.*

*But if we do not unite with Austria and England, will the Emperor Nicholas not reach Constantinople and the balance of Europe be upset?*

*To repeat, once more, let us leave these real or pretended fears to England and Austria. Let their prime concern be that of Russia seizing the Levant trade and becoming a maritime power: that matters little to us. Is it so essential that Great Britain retains its monopoly over the seas, that we shed French blood to keep the destroyers of our colonies, our fleets and our commerce in possession of the Ocean scepter? Should the legitimate race mobilize its forces in order to protect a house which is allied to the illegitimacy and which may be reserving for a moment of discord the means it believes it possesses to trouble France? A fine balance for us is that of a Europe where all the powers, as I have shown, have increased their weight and with common accord diminished that of France! Let them retreat to their former borders as we have; then we can rush to the aid of their freedom, if that freedom is threatened. They have shown no scruples in joining with Russia to dismember us and garner the fruits of our victories; let them now suffer, as we strengthen the links we have formed with that same Russia, in order to reset appropriate boundaries and re-establish the true balance of power in Europe!*

*Moreover, if the Emperor Nicholas wishes and is able to sign a peace treaty with Constantinople, would the destruction of the Ottoman Empire be the inevitable consequence of that action? Peace has been signed, under arms, in Vienna, Berlin and Paris; almost all the capitals of Europe have been captured in former times: have Austria, Bavaria, Prussia, France, or Spain perished? Twice the Cossacks and Pandours have camped in the courtyard of the Louvre; the kingdom of Henry IV was under military occupation for three years, and yet we would be disturbed to see Cossacks in the seraglio, and would show for the honor of that barbarism the susceptibility we have not shown towards the honor of*

civilization and our own country! Let the Porte's pride be humbled, and then perhaps it will be obliged to recognize some of the human rights that it flouts.'

'Now you can see where I am heading, and the consequence that I am about to draw from what has gone before. This is the consequence:

If the belligerent powers cannot arrive at an arrangement this winter; if the rest of Europe thinks to meddle in the quarrel by the spring; if various alliances are proposed; if France is absolutely obliged to choose between these alliances; if events force her to move from a position of neutrality; all her interests must lead her to prefer joining with Russia; a union into which it would be safer and easier, by offering certain advantages, to bring Prussia.

There is sympathy between Russia and France; the latter has virtually civilized the higher echelons of society of the former; she has transferred to them her language and manners. Placed at the two ends of Europe, France and Russia have no common frontier; there is no field of battle on which they can meet; they are not engaged in commercial rivalry, and Russia's natural enemies (the English and the Austrians) are also those of France. In times of peace, let the government in the Tuileries remain allied to the government in St Petersburg, and nothing in Europe can be at odds. In times of war, the alliance of the two governments will dictate the rules of engagement.

I have also pointed out that an alliance of France with England and Austria would be a false alliance, which would merely result in the loss of our blood and our wealth. An alliance with Russia, on the contrary, would lead directly to us obtaining possessions in the Archipelago and pushing back our frontiers to the banks of the Rhine. We could say this to Nicholas:

"Your enemies solicit us; we prefer peace to war, we desire to remain neutral. But if in the end you can only solve your differences with the Porte by arms, if you intend to advance to Constantinople, enter into a partition of European Turkey among the Christian powers. Those powers which are not in a position to expand on their eastern borders will receive compensation elsewhere. We wish to establish our frontier on the Rhine, from Strasbourg to Cologne. Such are our valid pretensions. Russia has an interest (your brother Alexander said so) in what makes France strong. If you consent to this arrangement and the other powers refuse, we will not tolerate them intervening in your issue with Turkey. If they attack you despite our remonstrance, we would fight alongside you always, on the same conditions we have just expressed."

That is what we might say to Nicholas. Austria and England will never grant us a border on the Rhine as the price of our alliance with them: now, sooner or later it is there, nevertheless, that France must set her frontier, as much for honor as for security.

A war with Austria and England has numerous possibilities of success and few chances of failure. Firstly it is a means of paralyzing Prussia, and even forcing her decision to unite with Russia and ourselves; if that happened, Holland could not declare herself an enemy. In the present mood, forty thousand Frenchmen defending the Alps would rouse all of Italy.

As to hostilities with England, if they were ever to commence, we would need to send twenty-five thousand more men to the Morea, or rapidly recall our troops and our fleet. Give up the idea of squadrons and disperse your ships individually over the oceans; order them to sink all prizes after having

*stripped out their equipment, multiply your letters of marque in the ports at the four corners of the earth, and Great Britain would soon sue for peace, obliged to do so by bankruptcies and commercial crisis. Have we not seen them capitulate before the United States Navy in 1814, which even today only consists of nine frigates and eleven other vessels?*

*Considered under the headings of both the general interests of society and our own private interests, Russia's war against the Porte ought not to do us any harm. According to the noblest concept of civilization, the human species can only gain from the destruction of the Ottoman Empire: the dominance of the Cross in Constantinople rather than the Crescent is a thousand times better for the nations. All the elements of morality and social politics are present in Christianity; all the seeds of social destruction lie in the religion of Mahomet. They say the Sultan has taken steps towards civilization: is that because he has tried, with the aid of renegade Frenchmen, and English and Austrian officers, to submit his fanatical hordes to military exercises? And since when has a routine apprenticeship in warfare been considered civilization? It is a great error, almost a crime, to have initiated the Turks in our tactical science: the soldiers one disciplines should be baptized, unless you wish to elevate the destruction of society into a grand design.*

*There is a great lack of foresight: Austria which has applauded the organization of the Ottoman army would be the first to feel the pain of its approval: if the Turks fought the Russians, they would be much more capable of measuring themselves against their Imperialist cousins; this time Vienna would not escape the Grand Vizier. Would the rest of Europe, which thinks it has nothing to fear from the Porte, be safe? Short-sighted and passionate men wish Turkey to be a normal military power, for her to participate in the usual rights of war and peace among civilized nations, all to maintain who knows what balance, the emptiness of the phrase allowing men to avoid grasping the concept: what would be the consequences if these wishes were realized? When it pleased the Sultan, on some pretext or other, to attack a Christian government, a fleet from Constantinople, effectively positioned, augmented by the fleet of the Pasha of Egypt, and a maritime contingent of barbarian powers, would declare a blockade of the coasts of Spain or Italy, and disembark fifty thousand men at Cartagena or Naples. Choose not to plant the Cross on St. Sophia: continue to train the hordes of Turks, Albanians, Negroes, and Arabs, and within twenty-five years the Crescent may gleam on the dome of St Peter's. Then will you call Europe to a crusade against the infidel armies of plague, slavery and the Koran? It will be too late.*

*Thus the general interest of society relies on the success of the Emperor Nicholas' armies.*

*As for the specific interests of France, I have shown adequately that they depend upon an alliance with Russia and that they may be particularly favored by the very war that power is undertaking now in the Orient.*

*I will summarize:*

*1. If Turkey consents to act on the basis of the Treaty of the 6th of July, nothing would be decided, there being no lasting peace between Turkey and Russia; the chances of war in the defiles of the Balkans would alter at every moment the assumptions and position of the plenipotentiaries occupied with the emancipation of Greece.*

2. *The probable conditions for peace between the Emperor Nicholas and Sultan Mahmud are subject to major objections.*
3. *Russia could defy an alliance between England and Austria, an alliance more formidable in appearance than reality.*
4. *It is probable that Prussia would rather ally with the Emperor Nicholas, a relative of Frederick-William III, than with the Emperor's enemies.*
5. *France would have everything to lose and nothing to gain by an alliance with England and Austria against Russia.*
6. *The freedom of Europe would not be threatened by Russian conquests in the Orient. It is quite absurd, and does not take account of the obstacles, to imagine the Russians hastening from the Bosphorus to impose their yoke on Germany and France: all empires are weakened by over-extension. As to the balance of forces, it is a long time since it has been disturbed on behalf of France; - she has lost her colonies, she is contained within her ancient borders, while England, Prussia, Russia and Austria are greatly increased.*
7. *If France was obliged to lose her neutrality, to take up arms for one party or the other, the general interests of civilization, as the specific interests of our country, ought to lead us to prefer an alliance with Russia. Through her we could obtain the course of the Rhine as our border, and colonies in the Archipelago, advantages which the Courts of St James and Vienna would never accord us.'*

*'Such is my summary of this Note. I can only argue hypothetically; I am unaware of what England, Austria and Russia are proposing or have proposed even as I write; perhaps there is information, a dispatch which reduces the truths exposed here to useless generalizations: that is the difficulty of distance and political conjecture. Nevertheless it remains certain that France is in a strong position; that the government is in a position to take a major role in events if it pays attention to what it desires, if it does not allow itself to be intimidated by anyone, if, to speak forthrightly, it joins vigor to action. We have a king who is venerated, an heir to the throne who with three hundred thousand men would, on the banks of the Rhine, increase the glory he gathered in Spain; our expedition to the Morea enables us to play a role full of honor; our political institutions are excellent, our finances are prospering in a manner without parallel in Europe: with that one can advance, head raised. What country but ours possesses genius, courage, soldiers and wealth!*

*Further, I do not pretend to have said the last word, to have foreseen everything; I lack the presumption to give out that my policy is the best; I know that there is something mysterious, intangible in human affairs. While it is true that one can articulate the ultimate generic results of a revolution, it is equally true that one will be wrong in detail, and specific events will often alter things in unexpected ways; and that while seeing the goal, one arrives there by paths whose existence one did not even suspect. It is certain, for example, that the Turks will be driven from Europe; but when and how? Will the present war deliver the civilized world from that scourge? Are the obstacles to peace which I have signaled insurmountable? Yes, if one follows an analogous process of reasoning; no, if one introduces into these calculations different circumstances to those which have occasioned the taking up of weapons.*

Hardly anything these days resembles what has been: outside religion and morality, the realities have altered in a major way, if not in their essence, at least in relation to men and things. D'Ossat remains an able negotiator still, Grotius a publicist of genius, Puffendorf a prudent spirit; but one would not apply their rules of diplomacy to our age, nor return to the treaty of Westphalia to set a valid policy for Europe. The people are now involved in matters once only carried out by governments. The people no longer feel as they once felt; they are no longer affected by the same events; they no longer see things from the same point of view; reason has made progress among them at the expense of imagination; positivism has won out over enthusiasm and passionate tendencies; a modicum of reason rules everywhere. On most thrones, and in the majority of the cabinet offices of Europe, sit men who are weary of revolutions, have had their fill of war, and are antipathetic to the spirit of adventure: here are emblems of hope for peaceful negotiation. There may also exist among nations internal obstacles which dispose them towards conciliatory measures.

The death of the Dowager Empress of Russia may give rise to the seeds of disturbances which have not been completely suppressed. That Princess was hardly involved with foreign policy, but she was a link with her sons; she appears to have exercised a substantial influence over the transactions which granted the crown to the Emperor Nicholas. However, it must be confessed that if Nicholas begins to be afraid once more, it would be one more reason for him to send soldiers outside his native land and seek safety in victory.

England, independently of her debts which constrain her actions, is embarrassed by affairs in Ireland: whether the Catholic Emancipation Bill is passed by Parliament or not, it will be of immense significance. The health of King George is fragile, that of his immediate successor is no better; if the incident foreseen arrives soon, there would be a new convocation of Parliament, perhaps a change of Ministers, and capable men are rare at present in England: a Regency of long duration could occur. In that precarious and critical situation, it is probable that England would sincerely desire peace, and would be afraid of risking a major war, in the midst of which she might be surprised by internal problems.

Finally we ourselves, despite our real and indisputable prosperity, even though we might appear splendid on the field of battle, if we are summoned are we ready to appear? Are our defenses in order? Have we the supplies required to support a large army? Is that army still wholly on a peace footing? If we were brusquely wakened by a declaration of war from England, Prussia and Holland, could we oppose a third invasion effectively? Napoleon's wars made known our fatal secret: that after a fortunate battle Paris could be reached in a few days; Paris cannot defend itself; that same Paris is far too near the frontier. The capital of France will only be defensible when we hold the left bank of the Rhine. We therefore need some time to prepare.

Let us add to all that, that the vices and virtues of Princes, their moral strengths and weaknesses, their character, their passions, even their habits, are the cause of actions and events contrary to calculation, and which belong to no political formula: sometimes the meanest of influences determines the greatest of occurrences in a sense opposed to all known likelihood; a slave can trigger the signing in Constantinople of a peace treaty which all Europe, begging on its knees, could not obtain.

What then if one of these causes beyond human prediction leads, this winter, to demands for negotiation, should those demands be rejected if they are not in accord with the principles in this Note?

*Certainly not: to gain time is a great thing when one is not ready. One may know what would be better, and be content with what is the least worst; political realities, especially, are relative; absolutism, in matters of State, produces serious difficulties. It would be best for the human species if the Turks were driven into the Bosphorus, but we are not charged with that expedition and perhaps Islam's hour has not yet tolled: hatred should be set aside to avoid stupidity. Nothing then must prevent France entering into negotiations, taking care to approach them as far as possible in the spirit in which this note is written. It is for the men at the tillers of empires to direct them, according to the winds, but avoiding the reefs.*

*Assuredly, if the powerful sovereign of the North consented to limit the conditions of peace to the execution of the Treaty of Akerman and the Emancipation of Greece, it would be possible to make the Porte see reason; but what probability is there of the Russians limiting themselves to conditions which they could obtain without firing a cannon? How can they abandon pretensions so loudly and publicly expressed? One means alone, if it is practical, presents itself: propose a general Congress at which the Emperor Nicholas would bow, or appear to bow, to the wishes of Christian Europe. A successful method among men is to salve their self-esteem, to give them a reason for breaking their word, and a way of retreating from a false step with honor.*

*The greatest obstacle to the idea of this Congress arises from the unexpected success of the Ottoman armies during the winter. If, because of the rigor of the season, the lack of provisions, the insufficiency of troops or some other cause, the Russians were obliged to abandon the siege of Silistria; if Varna (which however is hardly probable) fell into Turkish hands once more, Emperor Nicholas would find himself in a position which would preclude him from listening to any propositions, under pain of descending to the lowest rank of monarchs; then the war would be continued, and we would return to the eventualities deduced in this Note. If Russia lost its place as a military power, if Turkey were to replace it in that respect, Europe would merely face a different risk. Now, the danger threatened by Mahmud's scimitar, would be of a much more formidable nature than that of Emperor Nicholas' sword. If by chance fate established a Prince of note on the Sultan's throne, he may not live long enough to change laws and manners, as he has otherwise intended. Mahmud will die: to whom will he leave his Empire with its disciplined and fanatical soldiers, with its Ulemas holding in their hands, through their initiation in modern tactics, a fresh means of conquest for the Koran?*

*While Austria, terrified ultimately of all these false calculations, would be obliged to defend its frontiers, where the Janissaries would leave them nothing to fear, a new military insurrection, resulting possibly from the humiliation of Nicholas' armies, would perhaps break out in St Petersburg, and be gradually communicated, setting Northern Germany on fire. This is what men who rely, for policy, on vulgar fears and commonplaces, do not see. Trivial dispatches, petty intrigues, are the obstacles with which Austria intends to oppose an action that threatens us all. If France and England adopted a stance worthy of them, if they informed the Porte that, in the event of the Sultan closing his ears to all peace proposals, he would find himself at war by the spring, then that resolve would soon put an end to Europe's anxieties.'*

News of the existence of this *Memoir*, having been leaked to the diplomatic world, brought me an attention that I did not reject, but did not at all seek. I do not see much that would have surprised the positivists: my war in Spain was a very positive thing. The incessant workings of the broad revolution

which is taking place in our old society, by leading among us to the fall of the Legitimacy, has upset all calculations based on the permanence of the situation which existed in 1828.

Do you wish to convince yourself of the vast difference between the worth and glory of a great writer compared with a great politician? My diplomatic efforts had been crowned by what is recognized as the greatest talent: that is to say by *success*. Yet whoever was to read this *Memoir* would doubtless have skipped through it swiftly, and I would have done the same in the readers' place. Well, suppose that instead of this little masterpiece of legalistic reasoning, they had found in my effort an episode in the style of Homer or Virgil, heaven having granted me their genius, do you think they would have been tempted to skip the love of Dido in Carthage or the tears of Priam in Achilles' tent?

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 14

Letters to Madame Récamier

TO MADAME RÉCAMIER

*‘Tuesday, Rome, this 9th of December 1828.*

*I have been to the Accademia Tiberina of which I have the honor to be a member. I listened to some very witty speeches and some very fine verse. What a waste of intellect! This evening I hold my grand ricevimento (inaugural reception); I am filled with dismay, as I write.’*

*‘11th of December.*

*The grand ricevimento passed off marvelously well. Madame de Chateaubriand is delighted, because we had all the Cardinals in the world. All Europe in Rome was there, with Rome. Since I am condemned to this profession for some time, I like to do it as well as any other ambassador might. One’s enemies hate any kind of success, even the most wretched, and it punishes them if one succeeds in an area in which they consider themselves unequalled. Next Saturday I transform myself into a Canon of St. John Lateran, and on Sunday I dine with my colleagues. A more congenial reunion is that which takes place today: I dine with Monsieur Guerin and all the artists, and we are going to decide on your monument to Poussin. A young student full of talent, Monsieur Desprez, will execute a bas-relief taken from a painting by the great painter, and Monsieur Lemoyne will do the bust. Only French hands are involved in this.*

*To complete my tale of Rome, Madame de Castries has arrived. She is another of those little girls I used to bounce on my knee like Césarine (Madame de Barante). The poor woman is very much altered; her eyes filled with tears when I recalled her childhood at Lormois. Enchantment seems to have deserted that fair voyager’s house. What isolation, and for what! What would be better, you see, would be to come and find you again as soon as possible. If my Moses descends from the mountain satisfactorily, I will borrow one of his divine rays, in order to appear more brilliant and young in your eyes.’*

*‘Saturday, 13th*

*My dinner at the Accademia went wonderfully well. The young men were satisfied: an Ambassador dined with them for the very first time. I told them about the monument to Poussin: it was as if I had already honored their ashes.’*

*‘Thursday, the 18th of December 1828.*

*Instead of wasting my time and yours relating to you the deeds and gestures of my life, I prefer to send you everything recorded in the Rome newspaper. Here are twelve months more which have descended on my brow. When can I rest? When can I cease wasting my days on the highroads, days lent to me to achieve better things? I have spent, without realizing how rich I was; I thought the treasure inexhaustible. Now, seeing how it has diminished and how little time is left to spend at your feet, it makes my heart ache. But is there not a long existence after this one on earth? A poor and humble Christian, I tremble before Michelangelo’s Last Judgment; I do not know where I shall go, yet everywhere you are not*



*I will be most unhappy. I have told you of my projects and my future a hundred times. Ruins, health, the loss of all illusions, all say to me: "Go; retire; make an end." I find at the end of my journey only you. You have wished me to mark my passage through Rome, it is done: Poussin's tomb will remain. It will bear this inscription: F.-A. de Ch. to Nicholas Poussin, for the glory of art and the honor of France. What have I left to do here now? Nothing, especially after having subscribed to the tune of a hundred ducats for the monument to a man whom you love most, you say, next to me: Tasso.'*

*'Rome, Saturday the 3rd of January 1829.*

*'I recommence my New Year wishes: may Heaven accord you health and long life! Do not forget me: I have hopes, since you remember Monsieur de Montmorency and Madame de Staël so well, that your memory is as good as your heart. I said yesterday to Madame Salvage that I knew nothing in the world as beautiful as, or better than, you.*

*I spent an hour yesterday with the Pope. We spoke about everything, on subjects both noble and serious. He is a very distinguished and enlightened individual, and a Prince full of dignity. The adventures of my political existence only lacked a relationship with a sovereign Pontiff; it rounds off my career.*

*Do you wish to know exactly what I am doing? I rise at half past five, I breakfast at seven; at eight I return to my office; I write to you or I execute some business when there is any (the details regarding the French establishments and the French poor are onerous enough); at noon I go and wander among the ruins for two or three hours, or to St Peter's, or to the Vatican. Sometimes I make an obligatory visit before or after my walk; at five I return; I dress for the evening; I dine at six; at seven thirty I go to a soirée with Madame de Chateaubriand or I receive a few people at my residence. About eleven I go to bed, or I go out into the country despite the thieves and the malaria: what do I do there? Nothing; I listen to the silence, and watch my shadow move from arch to arch, along aqueducts lit by the moon.*

*The Romans are so accustomed to my methodical existence, that I serve them as a timepiece. Let them be quick; I will soon have finished my circuit of the dial.'*

*'Rome, Thursday the 8th of January 1829.*

*'I am very wretched; from the best weather in the world we have passed to rain, such that I cannot take my walks. Yet they were the only good times during my day. I would go along thinking of you in this deserted countryside; they could interpret the future and the past from my sentiments, since I used to take the same walks in former times. Once or twice a week I go to the place where the English girl drowned: who today remembers that poor young lady, Miss Bathurst? Her compatriots gallop the length of the river without thinking of her. The Tiber, which has seen so much, is not burdened by it at all. Besides, its waves are ever renewed: they are as pallid and tranquil as when they passed over that creature full of hope, beauty, and life.*

*There, I have become quite grave without noticing it. Forgive a poor hare, wet and penned in his form. I must tell you a little story about last Tuesday. There was an immense crowd at the Embassy: I was leaning backwards against a marble table, saluting the people as they came and went. An Englishwoman, whose face and name I did not know, approached me, looked me between the eyes, and said in a tone of voice you know: "Monsieur de Chateaubriand, you are very unhappy!" Astonished at the comment and*

*her manner of starting a conversation, I asked her what she meant. She replied: "I mean that I am sorry for you." With that she linked arms with another Englishwoman, and vanished in the crowd, and I did not see her again the rest of the evening. This curious stranger was neither young nor pretty; yet I am grateful for her mysterious words.*

*Your newspapers continue to go on about me. I am not sure what fly is biting them. I had thought myself forgotten as I wish to be.*

*I am writing to Monsieur Thierry by courier. He is at Hyères, and very ill. Not a word of reply from Monsieur de La Bouillèrie.'*

#### TO MONSIEUR THIERRY

*'Rome, this 8th of January 1829.*

*I was very moved, Sir, to receive the new edition of your Lettres sur l'histoire de France with words that prove you have been thinking of me. If those words were from your own hand, I would hope for my country's sake that your sight has returned to the studies which your talent draws on so wonderfully. I read, or rather re-read with avidity what is only-too-short a work. I dog-ear every page, in order to better recall the passages I wish to note. I will often quote you, Sir, in the work I have been preparing for so many years on our two earliest races. My ideas and researches will take shelter beneath your noble authority; I will frequently adopt your reform of the names; and finally I shall take pleasure in always being close to your opinion, in separating myself, doubtless despite myself, from the system proposed by Monsieur Guizot; but I cannot, with that ingenious writer, overturn the most authentic memorials, making all the Franks nobles and freemen, and all the Gallo-Romans slaves of the Franks. Salic law and Ripuary law have a host of rules founded on differences in status among the Franks; "Si quis ingenuus ingenuum ripuarium extra solum vendiderit: if a free man sells a free Ripuarian outside his territory, etc. etc."*

*You know Sir that I strongly wish you to live in Rome. We would be seated among ruins; there you would teach me history; an old disciple, I would listen to my young master only regretting that I no longer have enough years ahead of me to profit from his lessons:*

*"Such is the fate of man: he learns with age.*

*But what's the use of being a sage*

*When the end's so near?"*

*That verse is from an unpublished ode by a man who is no more, by my dear old friend Fontanes. So, among the ruins of Rome, Sir, everything warns me of what I have lost, of what little time remains to me, and of the brevity of our hopes which once seemed so enduring: Spem longam.*

*Sir, believe that no one admires you or is more devoted to you than your servant.'*

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 15

A dispatch

#### *DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE DE LA FERRONNAYS*

*‘Rome, this 12th of January 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*I saw the Pope on the 2nd of this month; he was so good as to detain me for an hour and a half in private.*

*I must give you an account of the conversation I had with His Holiness.*

*Firstly it was a discussion about France. The Pope began by praising the King most sincerely. “At no time,” he said, “has the Royal Family of France shown so complete a range of qualities and virtues. Calm has been re-established among the clergy; the bishops have capitulated.”*

*“– That submission,” I replied “is due in part to the insight and moderation of Your Holiness.”*

*“– I have given advice,” the Pope replied “that appeared reasonable to me. Spirituality is not compromised by the decrees; the bishops would perhaps have been better not to write their first letter; but having declared *non possumus: we cannot*, it was difficult to retract. They were trying to display the least possible contradiction between their actions and their language at the moment of their collusion: one must pardon them. They are pious men, very attached to the King and the monarchy; they have their weaknesses like other men.”*

*All that, Monsieur le Comte, was said in very clear and effective French.*

*After thanking the Holy Father for the confidence he had shown in me, I spoke with esteem of the Cardinal-Secretary of State:*

*“I chose him,” he said to me, “because he is travelled, because he understands the general affairs of Europe, and because he seemed to me to have the kind of ability that his role demands. He has only written, in regard to your decrees, what I thought and what I would have recommended him to write.*

*“– Dare I communicate to His Holiness,” I replied, “my opinion regarding the religious situation in France?”*

*“– That would give me great pleasure,” the Pope responded.*

*I suppress several compliments that His Holiness was pleased to address to me.*

*“I consider then,” Most Holy Father, “that the evil originally arose from the Clergy’s contempt: instead of supporting new institutions, or at least being silent about them, they have allowed words of criticism, to put it no stronger, to escape, in their instructions and speeches. Impiety, which only knows how to reproach your Ministers, has seized on their words and made a weapon of them; it has cried that*

Catholicism is incompatible with the establishment of public freedom, that there is a war to the death between the Charter and the priesthood. By alternative means, our ecclesiastics might have obtained all they could have wished from the nation. There are great depths of religiosity in France, and a visible inclination to forget our former differences at the foot of the altar; but there is also a real attachment to the institutions established by the descendants of Saint Louis. The degree of influence the Clergy would have, if it displayed itself as simultaneously a friend of the King and of the Charter, is incalculable. I have never stopped preaching that policy in my writings and my speeches; but the passions of the moment did not grant me a hearing and took me for an enemy.”

*The Pope listened to me with the greatest attention.*

“I follow your thinking,” *the Pope said, after a moment’s silence.* “Jesus Christ did not pronounce on the form government should take. *Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s* was all he said: obey the established authorities. The Catholic religion has prospered under republics as it has under monarchies; it has made immense progress in the United States; it reigns alone in the Spanish Americas.”

*These words are quite remarkable, Monsieur le Comte, at the very moment when the Court of Rome is strongly inclined to grant recognition to bishops nominated by Bolivar.*

*The Pope resumed:* “You see the crowds of foreign Protestants in Rome: their presence is good for the country; but it is also good in another way; the English come here with the strangest notions about the Pope and the Papacy, regarding fanaticism in the Clergy, and the slavery of the people of this country: they only have to be here a couple of months to change their views. They see I am merely a bishop like any other bishop, that the clergy of Rome is neither ignorant nor an oppressor, and that all in all my subjects are not treated like animals.”

*Encouraged by this heartfelt effusion and seeking to widen the scope of the conversation, I said to the Sovereign Pontiff:* “Does not Your Holiness consider this a favorable moment for the strengthening of Catholic unity, and the reconciliation of dissident sects, by minor concessions in the rules? Prejudice against the Court of Rome is weakening everywhere, and in a yet fervent century, the work of reunion has already been attempted by Leibnitz and Bossuet.”

“– That is a great matter,” *the Pope said;* “but I must await the moment fixed by Providence. I agree that prejudice is weakening: the sectarian divisions in Germany have engendered weariness in those sects. In Saxony, where I lived for three years, I was the first to establish a hospital for foundlings and obtain agreement for it to be run by Catholics. Then objections were raised against me by the Protestants; today those same Protestants are the first to applaud the establishment and endow it. The number of Catholics in Great Britain has increased; it is true that there are many foreigners there.”

*The Pope being silent for a moment, I profited from it by introducing the question of the Catholics in Ireland.*

“If emancipation takes place,” *I said,* “the Catholic religion in Britain will expand still further.”

“– That is true from one perspective,” *His Holiness replied,* “but from another there are obstacles. The Irish Catholics are very fervent and very intemperate. Has not O’Connell, otherwise a man of merit, said in a speech that a Concordat has been proposed between the Holy See and the British Government? There

is nothing in it; that assertion, which I cannot publicly contradict, has given me a great deal of pain. Thus to bring about reunion with the dissidents, things must mature, and God Himself will complete His work. Popes can only wait.”

*That is not my opinion, Monsieur le Comte: but since I was charged with making the Holy Father's opinion known to the King, I was not called upon to contest it.*

“– What are your newspapers saying?” *the Pope resumed, with a sort of levity.* “They chatter a lot! Those of Holland even more; but they tell me that an hour after having read their articles, no one in your country thinks of them again.”

“ – That is quite true, Most Holy Father: you see how the Gazette de France attacks me (since I know Your Holiness reads all the papers, not forgetting the Courrier); yet the Sovereign Pontiff treats me with extreme kindness; there is therefore room to believe that the *Gazette* has no great impact on him.” *The Pope smiled and nodded.* “Well, Most Holy Father, there are others like Your Holiness! If the newspapers say truly, the good they have spoken remains; if falsely, it is as if they had not spoken at all. The Pope must wait for the speeches during the session; the extreme right will maintain that Monsieur le Cardinal Bernetti is not a priest, and that his letters regarding the decrees are not articles of faith; the extreme left will declare that we have no need to take orders from Rome. The majority will applaud, in deference to the King's Council, and will praise Your Holiness' spirit of wisdom and peace.”

*This little dissertation appeared to delight the Holy Father, happy to gain some insight into the workings of our constitutional machinery. Finally, Monsieur le Comte, thinking that the King and his Council would very much like to know the Pope's thoughts regarding current events in the East, I repeated various news items from the papers, not being authorized to communicate to the Holy See what you told me positively in your dispatch of the 18th of December regarding the recall of our expedition from the Morea.*

*The Pope did not hesitate to reply to me; he seemed to be alarmed at military discipline being imparted imprudently to the Turks. Here are his actual words:*

“If the Turks are already capable of resisting Russia what will their power be when they have obtained a glorious peace? Who can stop them, after four or five years quietly perfecting their new tactics, from descending on Italy?”

*I confess to you, Monsieur le Comte, that in discovering these ideas and anxieties in the mind of the Sovereign most likely to feel the repercussions of the enormous error that has been committed, I congratulate myself on having demonstrated to you in greater detail, in my Note on affairs in the East, the same ideas and anxieties.*

“We need firm resolution,” *the Pope added,* “on the part of the Allied powers to put an end to the evils with which the future is menaced. France and England still have time to prevent it; but if a new campaign begins, it may set Europe alight, and it will be too late to extinguish it.”

“– All the more accurate a reflection,” *I replied,* “since if Europe is divided, God forbid, fifty thousand Frenchmen in Italy will call all in question.”

*The Pope did not reply; it merely seemed to me that the idea of seeing the French in Italy did not inspire him with fear. Everywhere they are weary of the Court of Vienna's inquisition, its intrigues, its endless encroachment and its little plots for uniting, in confederation against France, nations which detest the Austrian yoke.*

*Such, Monsieur le Comte, is the summary of my lengthy conversation with His Holiness. I am not sure if we have been in a position to understand private Papal sentiments any more deeply than this, or if a Prince who governs the Christians of the world has previously expressed himself so clearly on such a range of subjects, and outside the narrow circuit of the usual diplomatic ties. There is common ground between the Sovereign Pontiff and myself, and it was easy to see that Leo XII, by the nature of his candor, and the direction of this private conversation, was not dissimulating and did not seek to deceive.*

*The Pope's inclinations and desires are evidently in France's favor: when he took up the keys of St. Peter, he belonged to the zelanti (zealous) faction; now he seeks strength in moderation: that is what wielding power always teaches. For that reason, he is disliked by the Cardinalist faction he has quit. Not having found any men of talent in the secular clergy, he has chosen his principal counsellors from the regular clergy; from which it follows that the monks support him, while the prelates and the simple priests provide him with a kind of opposition. The latter, when I arrived in Rome, all had minds more or less infected by lies emanating from our congregation; now, they are infinitely more reasonable; all, in general, blame our clergy for taking up their shields. It is interesting to note that the Jesuits are as much enemies here as in France: they have as adversaries primarily the members and leaders of the other Orders. They have formulated a plan by means of which they would dominate exclusively public education in Rome. The Dominicans have foiled this plan. The Pope is not very popular because he governs well. His little army is composed of former soldiers of Bonaparte who present quite a military appearance and make fine policemen on the highroads. If material Rome has lost its picturesque aura, it has gained in propriety and salubriousness. His Holiness has had trees planted and the beggars and solitaries turned away: another subject of complaint from the populace. Leo XII is a hard worker; he sleeps little and barely eats at all. Only one of his youthful interests remains, that of hunting, an exercise essential to his health which, otherwise, seems strengthened. He fires a few rifle shots in the vast enclosure of the Vatican Gardens. The zelanti have a great problem excusing this innocent distraction. They reproach the Pope for weakness and inconstancy in his affections.*

*The radical vice of the political constitution in this country is easy to grasp: elderly men always proclaim an elderly man like themselves as sovereign. This old man, having become master, in turn names old men as Cardinals. Within this vicious circle, supreme power is always thus enervated and on the brink of the grave. The Prince never occupies the throne long enough to execute the plans of improvement he has conceived. What is needed is for a Pope to have enough resolution to suddenly promote a number of younger Cardinals, in a manner that would assure a majority in the future election of a young Pontiff. But the rules of Sixtus V which grant hats to Palace officials, the influence of custom and habit, the interests of the people who receive rewards at every transfer of the coronet, the individual ambitions of the Cardinals who desire a short reign in order to multiply their chances of achieving the Papacy, and a thousand other obstacles too numerous to mention, stand in the way of a rejuvenation of the Sacred College.*

*The conclusion of this dispatch, Monsieur le Comte, is that, given the current state of things, the King can count entirely on the Court of Rome.*

*As a warning concerning my manner of seeing and feeling, if I have any criticism of myself to make in this recital which I have the honor of sending you, it is to have weakened rather than exaggerated His Holiness' expressions. My memory is very clear; I wrote down the conversation on leaving the Vatican, and my private secretary has merely copied my minute word for word. The latter, scribbled rapidly, was barely readable even by me. You would never have been able to decipher it.*

*I have the honor to be, etc.'*

(Shortly after the date of this letter, Monsieur de La Ferronnays, who was ill, left for Italy leaving the foreign affairs portfolio, in the hands of Monsieur Portalis, *for the interim*.)

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 16

Letters to Madame Récamier

TO MADAME RÉCAMIER

‘Rome, Tuesday the 13th of January 1829.

*Yesterday evening at eight o'clock I wrote you a letter which Monsieur de Viviers is bringing you; this morning, on waking, I am writing to you again by the ordinary courier who leaves at midday. You know the poor ladies of Saint Denis: they feel quite deserted since the arrival of the great ladies of Santissima Trinità dei Monti; without being an enemy of the latter I am ranged with Madame de Chateaubriand on the side of the weak. For a month now the ladies of Saint-Denis had wanted to give an entertainment for Monsieur the Ambassador and Madame the Ambassadors: it took place yesterday afternoon. Imagine a theatre set up in a kind of sacristy with a gallery over the church; for actresses a dozen little girls, between eight and fourteen years old, playing the Maccabees. They had made their own helmets and cloaks. They declaimed their French verse with verve and in Italian accents the most amusing in the world; they stamped their feet at moments of intensity: they included a niece of Pius VII, a daughter of Thorwaldsen, and another, the daughter of Chauvin the painter. They were indescribably pretty in their paper finery. The one who played the High Priest sported a large black beard which delighted her, but tickled her, and which she was obliged to keep adjusting with a little white thirteen year old hand. As audience there were ourselves, a few of their mothers, the nuns, Madame Salvage, two or three Abbés, and another twenty or so little pupils, all in white with veils. We had to transport the cakes and ices from the Embassy. Someone played the piano between the acts. Judge the hope and joy which must have preceded this convent performance, and the memories which will follow it! The whole thing ended with a Vivat in aeternum, sung by three nuns in the church.’*

‘Rome, the 15th of January 1829.

*Once more, for you! Tonight we have experienced wind and rain like that in France: I imagined it beating on your little window; I found myself transported to your little room, I saw your harp, your piano, your birds; you played my favorite air or that derived from Shakespeare; and I am in Rome, far from you! Eight hundred miles and the Alps separate us!*

*I have received a letter from that spiritual lady who sometimes came to visit me at the Ministry: judge how she pays court to me: she is mad for the Turks; Mahmud is a great man who has advanced his nation!*

*This Rome, in whose midst I am, should teach me contempt for politics. Here freedom and tyranny perished equally; I see the ruins of the Republic and Tiberius' Empire jumbled together; what is today but all of that mingled in the same dust! Does the Capuchin who sweeps this dust with his robe in passing not seem to render more vivid the vanity of vanities? Yet I return despite myself to the destiny of my poor country. I desire for it, religion, glory and freedom without considering my powerlessness to adorn it with that threefold crown.’*

‘Rome, Thursday the 5th of February 1829.



Torre Vergata is a monastic property situated about three miles from Nero's tomb, on the left coming from Rome, in a most beautiful and deserted place: there are a vast number of ruins flowering from land covered with grass and thistles. I commenced an excavation there the day before yesterday, Tuesday, after writing to you. I was accompanied only by Hyacinthe and Visconti who is directing the excavation. We have the loveliest weather in the world. The dozen men, armed with picks and shovels, who dig up the tombs and the ruins of houses and palaces in profound solitude, offer a spectacle worthy of you. I had only one wish that you might be there. I would willingly consent to live with you in a tent in the midst of the ruins.

I have set to with my own hands; I discovered some marble fragments: the indications are excellent and I hope to find something which will compensate me for the money spent in this lottery of the dead; I already have a block of Greek marble large enough to use for the Poussin bust. This excavating will put a stop to my walks; I go and sit every day in the midst of the debris. To what century, and what people did they belong? We are shifting famous dust perhaps without knowing. Perhaps some inscription will illuminate a historical fact, erase some error, or establish some truth. And then, when I have departed with my twelve half-naked peasants, all will fall again into silence and oblivion. Can you imagine all the passions, and interests which once stirred in these deserted places? There were masters and slaves, happiness and sorrow, lovely ones who were loved and ambitious ones who wanted to be rulers. What remains are a few birds, and I, for a very short while longer: we will soon vanish. Tell me, do you think it is worth the trouble of my being one of the council members of a petty King of the Gauls, I, a barbarian from Armorica, traveller among savages in a world unknown to the Romans, and Ambassador to the priests they threw to the lions? When I summoned Leonidas in Lacedemonia, he did not respond: the sound of my steps at Torre Vergata will have woken no one. And when I in turn am in my grave, I will not even hear the sound of your voice. So I must hasten to return to you and put an end to all these chimeras of human existence. There is no good except in retirement, and no truth except in an attachment like yours.'

'Rome, this 7th of February 1829.

I have received a long letter from General Guilleminot; he tells me a tale of woe regarding what he has endured in his travels round the coasts of Greece; and yet Guilleminot was the Ambassador; he had large ships and an army under his command. To go, after our soldiers have departed, to a country where there is not a house or a field of corn left intact, among a scattered population forced to become brigands through poverty, is not a viable project for a woman (Madame Lenormant).

I am going to my dig this morning: yesterday we found the skeleton of a Goth, a soldier, and an arm from the statue of a woman. It was an encounter with the destroyer in the ruins he had made; we have high hopes of retrieving the statue this morning! If the architectural remains I have discovered are worth the effort, I will not have them demolished in order to sell the stones as is usually done; I will leave them standing, and they can bear my name: they are from the time of Domitian. We have an inscription indicating that: it was a fine age of Roman art.'

## BOOK XXIX

### CHAPTER 17

A dispatch to Monsieur le Comte Portalis – The death of Leo XII

*‘Rome, this Friday the 6th of February 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*His Holiness has suddenly experienced an attack of the illness to which he is subject: his life is in the most imminent danger. They have just ordered the closing of all the attractions. I come from the Cardinal-Secretary of State, who is himself ill and who despairs for the Pope’s life. The loss of so enlightened and moderate a Sovereign Pontiff would be a true calamity at this time for Christianity and above all for France. I thought it important Monsieur le Comte that the King’s government should be prepared for the probable outcome, in order to take in advance whatever measures it judged necessary. Consequently, I have sent a courier on horseback to Lyons. The courier carries a letter I have written to the Prefect of the Rhône, with a telegraph dispatch which he will transmit to you and another letter which I have asked him to send you by dispatch rider. If we have the misfortune to lose His Holiness, a fresh courier will bring you all the details in Paris.*

*I have the honor, etc.’*

*‘Eight in the evening...*

*The Congregation of Cardinals already assembled has forbidden the Cardinal-Secretary of State to issue any permits for post-horses. If the Pope dies, my courier will not be able to leave until after the courier of the Sacred College has left. I have tried to send a man to take my dispatches to the Tuscan frontier. The bad roads and the lack of horses for hire have rendered the plan unachievable. Forced to wait in Rome, which has become a kind of closed prison, I keep hoping that the news will reach you, at least by telegraph, a few hours before it is known to other governments beyond the Alps. It might well be however that the courier sent to the Papal Nuncio, who will of necessity leave before mine, will send you the news himself, by telegraph, as he passes through Lyons.’*

*‘Tuesday, the 10th of February, nine in the morning*

*The Pope has just died; my courier is leaving. In a few hours he will be followed by Monsieur le Comte de Montebello, attaché to the Embassy.*

*‘Rome, this 10th of February 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*I have sent the special courier to Lyons on horseback, about two hours ago, who will transmit the regrettable and unforeseen news of the death of His Holiness. Now I am sending Monsieur le Comte de Montebello, attaché to the Embassy, to bring you some necessary detail.*

*The Pope died of that haemorrhoidal condition to which he was subject. The blood, being carried to the bladder, occasioned a retention which they tried to relieve by means of an incision. It is thought*

*His Holiness was injured by the operation. However it may be, after four days of suffering, Leo XII died this morning at nine as I was arriving at the Vatican, where an agent of the Embassy had spent the night. The letter dispatched with my first courier will inform you, Monsieur le Comte, of my vain efforts to obtain a permit for post-horses before the Pope's death.*

*Yesterday I went to see the Cardinal-Secretary of State, who was still in the throes of a violent attack of gout; I had quite a long conversation with him about the series of problems we will now be faced with. I deplore the loss of a Prince whose moderate sentiments and knowledge of European affairs were so helpful to Christian peace. "It is not only a great misfortune for France," the Secretary of State replied, "but a greater misfortune for the State of Rome than you imagine. Discontent and misery are rife in our provinces, and however much the Cardinals feel obliged to follow a different policy to that of Leo XII, they will see how much they will draw on it. As for me, my function ceases with the Pope's life, and I shall have nothing to reproach myself with."*

*This morning I saw Cardinal Bernetti again, who has indeed ceased functioning as Secretary of State: he held to the language of the previous day. I asked to meet with him before he went into conclave. We agreed we would speak about the choice of a Sovereign Pontiff who might be able to continue Leo XII's policy of moderation. I shall have the honor of transmitting to you any information I acquire.*

*It is probable that the Pope's death and the fall of Cardinal Bernetti will delight the enemies of the decrees; they will proclaim this sad event as a punishment from Heaven. It is easy to read that thought on various French visages in Rome.*

*I doubly mourn the Pope; I had the honor to gain his confidence: the prejudice against me which they had taken care to instill in his mind, before my arrival, had been dissipated, and he did me the honor of testifying loudly and in public, on every occasion, to the great esteem in which he held me.*

*Now, Monsieur le Comte, permit me to enter into an explanation of various facts:*

*I was Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of Pius VII's death. You will find in the Ministry files, if you judge it appropriate to take a look, my series of communications with Monsieur le Duc de Laval. The custom is, on the death of a Pope, to send a Special Ambassador, or to accredit the Ambassador in residence with new letters to the Sacred College. It is this last course I propose be followed, in the manner of His Late Majesty Louis XVIII. The King will ordain what he thinks best for his service. Four French Cardinals came to Rome for the election of Leo XII. France now has five; it is certainly not a negligible number of votes in the conclave. I await, Monsieur le Comte, the King's orders. Monsieur de Montebello, charged with bringing you this dispatch, will remain at your disposal.*

*I have the honor, etc., etc.'*

*TO MADAME RÉCAMIER*

*'Rome, the 10th of February 1829, eleven at night*

*I wanted to write you a long letter, but the dispatch I was obliged to write in my own hand and the fatigue of the least few days have exhausted me.*

*I mourn the Pope; I had obtained his trust. Now I am charged with a great task. It is impossible to know what the result will be, and what influence it will have on my destiny.*

*Conclaves normally last for two months, and that will leave me quite free for Easter. I will speak to you soon at the end of it all.*

*Imagine, they found the poor Pope, last Thursday, before he was taken ill, writing his epitaph. They wished to distract him from such a gloomy thought: “No,” he said, “it will all be over in a few days.”*

*‘Thursday, Rome, the 12th of February 1829.*

*I read your newspapers. They often upset me. I see in the Globe, that Monsieur le Comte Portalis is, according to the paper, my declared enemy. Why? Am I seeking his place? He troubles himself too much about me; I never think of him. I wish him every good fortune possible; and yet, if it were true that he wished to declare war, he would find me ready. They seem to me to talk nonsense about everything, about the immortal Mahmud, and about the evacuation of the Morea.*

*The most likely outcome is that the evacuation will once more thrust Greece beneath the Turkish yoke with a loss to us of our honor and forty millions. There is plenty of spirit in France, but we lack minds and commonsense: a few phrases intoxicate us, we are led on by words, and what is worse is that we are always ready to denigrate our friends and exalt our enemies. Moreover, is it not strange that they should have insisted on the King using my own words, in a speech, about the concord of public liberty and royalty and yet were so annoyed with me for using that language? And the men who insisted the Crown speak thus were those most warmly in favor of the censure! As for the rest, I am about to see the election of a Head of the Church; that spectacle is the last great spectacle which I shall be present at in my life; it will close my career. (I was wrong. Note: 1837)*

*Now the pleasures of Rome are over, business commences. I shall be obliged on the one hand to write an account of all that takes place for the Government, and on the other to fulfil the duties of my new role; I shall have to pay my compliments to the Sacred College, and be present at the funeral of the Holy Father, to whom I became attached because he was little loved, and all the more so since fearing to find an enemy in him I found a friend, who from the heights of St Peter’s throne gave a formal denial to my Christian calumniators. Then, the French Cardinals will be down on me. At least I have written to make representations to the Archbishop of Toulouse.*

*In the midst of all this bother, the Poussin monument is being worked on; and the excavation is successful; I have found three fine heads, the torso of a draped woman, and the funeral inscription of a brother for a young sister, which moved me.*

*Regarding inscriptions, I told you that the poor Pope had written his own on the eve of the day he fell ill, predicting that he would soon die; he left a note in which he recommends his needy family to the government of Rome: it is only those who have loved much who possess such virtues.’*

**End of Book XXIX**

BOOK XXX  
CHAPTER 1  
The Rome Embassy - Continued

*Rome, this 17th of February 1829.*

Before passing on to matters of importance I will note a few facts.

On the death of the Sovereign Pontiff the Government of the States of Rome rests in the hands of three leading Cardinals of the Order, the deacon, priest and bishop, and of the Cardinal camerlingo. The custom is for the Ambassadors to go and pay their respects, in a speech, to the congregation of Cardinals gathered for the opening of the Conclave in St Peter's.

The body of his Holiness, first shown in the Sistine Chapel, was taken last Friday, the 13th of February to the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament in St Peter's; it remains there until Sunday the 15th. Then it will be placed in the monument which the remains of Pius VII occupy, while the latter have been taken down into the crypt.

*TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.*

*'Rome, this 17th of February 1829.*

*I have seen Leo XII exposed, his face uncovered, on a humble bier in the midst of Michelangelo's masterpieces; I was present at the first funeral ceremony in St Peter's. The elderly Cardinals superintending, no longer able to see, assured themselves that the Pope's coffin was properly nailed shut by feeling with their fingers. By the flames of torches, inter-fused with moonlight, the coffin was finally raised by a pulley and suspended in the shadows to be deposited in the sarcophagus of Pius VII.*

*They brought me the poor Pope's little cat: it is grey all over and very gentle like its former master.'*

*DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE PORTALIS.*

*'Rome, this 17th of February 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*I had the honor of informing you in my first letter, sent to Lyons with the telegraph dispatch, and in my dispatch number 15, of the difficulties I encountered getting my couriers away on the 10th. These people here are still stuck in the age of Guelphs and Ghibellines, as if the death of a Pope being known an hour earlier or later might cause an Imperial Army to invade Italy.*

*The obsequies of the Holy Father will be completed on Sunday the 22nd, and the Conclave will open on Monday evening the 23rd, after assisting at the Mass of the Holy Spirit in the morning: they are already furnishing the cells in the Quirinal Palace.*

*I will not speak about the views, Monsieur le Comte, of the Austrian Court, or the wishes of the governments of Naples, Madrid or Turin. Monsieur le Duc de Laval, in his correspondence with me in*

1823, described the staff of Cardinals a part of which is still there today. You can look at number 5 and its attachment, and numbers 34, 55, 70 and 82. There are also some notes in the Ministry files, obtained elsewhere. Those pen-portraits, often enough fantasies, may amuse, but achieve nothing. Three things no longer influence the election of Popes: feminine intrigue, ambassadorial plotting, and Court power. They no longer vote in the general interest of society, but in the private interests of individuals and families who seek position and wealth from the election of a head of the Church.

There are immense tasks now awaiting the Holy See: the re-integration of dissident sects, the strengthening of European society, etc. A Pope who entered into the spirit of the century, and placed himself at the head of enlightened generations could rejuvenate the Papacy; but these ideas will not penetrate the aged heads of the Sacred College; Cardinals arriving at the end of their own lives pass on to one of themselves an elective royalty which will swiftly die with them; seated among the twin ruins of Rome, the Popes have an air of being moved by nothing but the power of death.

The Cardinals elected Cardinal Della Genga (Leo XII), following the veto on Cardinal Severoli, because they thought he was about to die. Della Genga being wise enough to live, they cordially hated him for misleading them. Leo XII chose capable administrators for the convents; another subject of complaint among the Cardinals. But, on the other hand, the deceased Pope, by advancing the monks, chose to regularize the monasteries in such a way that he won no thanks for his generosity. The wandering eremites they turned away, the working men whom they forced to take their drink standing in the street in order to avoid knife fights in the taverns; unfortunate changes in the perception of taxation, the abuse committed by some familiars of the Holy Father, even this Pope's death arriving at a moment which has robbed the theatres and tradesmen of Rome of the benefit derived from the extravagance during the Carnival, have made the memory of a Prince worthy of the most lively regret anathema: at Civita-Vecchia they wanted to burn a house belonging to two men they thought had been honored by his favor.

Among the many candidates, four are particularly noteworthy: Cardinal Capellari, Head of Propaganda, Cardinal Pacca, Cardinal de Gregorio and Cardinal Guistinani.

Cardinal Capellari is a capable and erudite man. He will be rejected by the Cardinals, it is said, as too young, as a monk and as a stranger to world affairs. He is Austrian and is considered fervent and set in his religious opinions. However, it is he who, consulted by Leo XII, saw nothing in the King's decrees which justified our bishops' complaints; it is he again who drew up the Concordat of the Court of Rome with Holland and who was of the opinion that canonical institution should be granted to the bishops of the Spanish Republic: all that suggests a rational mind, conciliatory and moderate. I had these details from Cardinal Bernetti, with whom I had one of the conversations, on Friday the 13th, which I told you of in my dispatch of the 15th.

It is important to the diplomatic corps, and especially the French Ambassador, that the Secretary of State in Rome should be a man easy to deal with, and used to European affairs. Cardinal Bernetti is the Minister who suits us in all respects; he commits himself with the zelanti and the Congregationalists on our behalf; we would wish him to be retained by the future Pope. I have asked him with which of the four Cardinals would he have the best chance of being returned to power. He replied: "With Capellari."

Cardinals Pacca and de Gregorio are described in an accurate manner in attachment number 5 of the correspondence previously cited; but Cardinal Pacca is greatly weakened by age, and his memory, like that of the Cardinal-Dean La Somaglia, fails him almost completely.

Cardinal de Gregorio would be a suitable Pope. Though ranged with the zelanti, he is not without a degree of moderation; he opposes the Jesuits who have here, as they have in France, adversaries and enemies. Neapolitan subject that he is, Cardinal De Gregorio is rejected by Naples, and even more so by Cardinal Albani, executor of Austria's most important actions in the Conclave. The Cardinal is the legate in Bologna; he is over eighty and ill: there is therefore a possibility that he will not come to Rome.

Finally, Cardinal Giustiniani is the Cardinal of the nobility of Rome; he is a nephew of Cardinal Odescalchi, and he will probably receive a fair number of votes. But on the other hand he is poor and his relatives are poor; Rome fears the aspirations of that indigence.

You are aware, Monsieur le Comte, of all the trouble Guistiniani has made in Spain, and I know, more than most, the problems he caused me after King Ferdinand was liberated. He has been equally immoderate in the Bishopric of Imola, which the Cardinal currently governs; he has revived the decrees of Saint Louis against blasphemers: he is not a Pope for our age. In other respects, he is quite a learned man, a Hebraist, Hellenist, and mathematician, but more suited to office work than public affairs. I do not think Austria will support him.

Given all that, human predictions are often proved wrong; often a man changes on achieving power; the zelante Cardinal Della Genga became the conciliatory Pope Leo XII. Perhaps a Pope will appear, from outside these four competitors, whom no one is currently considering. Cardinal Castiglioni, Cardinal Benvenuti, Cardinal Galleffi, Cardinal Arezzo, Cardinal Gamberini, and even the venerable old Dean of the Sacred College, La Somaglia, despite being in his second childhood or rather because of it, are in the running. The latter even has some chance, since as Bishop and Prince of Ostia, his exaltation would lead to five senior positions becoming free.'

'One assumes the Conclave will either be very lengthy or quite short: there will not be conflict over the method as there was at the time of Pius VII's death; the Conclavists and Anti-Conclavists have completely disappeared: which should make the election straightforward. But, on the other hand, there will be individual struggles between the contenders who gather a substantial number of votes, and since they only need a third of the votes, plus one, to exclude a candidate, which should not be confounded with the right of exclusion, the balloting between the candidates could be prolonged.

Should France exercise the right of exclusion which she shares with Austria and Spain? Austria exercised it against Severoli in the previous Conclave, through its intermediary Cardinal Albani. Against whom might the French Crown wish to exercise the right? Should it be against Cardinal Fesch, if by any chance they were to consider him, or against Cardinal Giustiniani? Would the latter be worth the trouble of exercising the veto, which is always somewhat odious in that it hinders the freedom of election?

To which Cardinal would the King's government entrust the exercising of its right of exclusion? Would it wish the French Ambassador to seem charged with his government's secret wishes, and ready to block the Conclave's choice if it displeases Charles X? Indeed, does the government have any

*preference? Is there some Cardinal to whom it wishes to lend its support? Certainly, if all the 'family' Cardinals, that is to say the Spanish, Neapolitan and even Piedmontese Cardinals, were to unite their votes to those of the French Cardinals, if one formed a party of the Crown, we would carry the Conclave; but these unions are fantasies and among the Cardinals we have various Courts represented who are enemies rather than friends.*

*We are assured that the Primate of Hungary and the Archbishop of Milan will come to the Conclave. The Austrian Ambassador in Rome, Count Lutzow, shows good intentions as regards the conciliatory character that the future Pope should possess. Let us await instructions from Vienna.*

*Further, I am persuaded that all the ambassadors on earth can do nothing now regarding the election of the Sovereign Pontiff and that we are all perfectly superfluous in Rome. Moreover I do not see any pressing reason to accelerate or retard (something which is anyway not in anyone's power) the workings of the Conclave. Let the foreign Cardinals be present or not in Italy for this Conclave, as it may suit the dignity of their Courts; it will have little influence on the result of the election. If one had millions to spend, it might be possible to engineer a Pope: I see that as the only means, and France is not in the habit of doing so.*

*In my confidential instructions to Monsieur le Duc de Laval (13th of September 1823) I said: "We request that they place on the Pontiff's throne a prelate distinguished for piety and virtue. We desire only that he be enlightened enough and of sufficiently conciliatory a spirit to be able to judge the political status of governments and not involve them, through idle demands, in inextricable difficulties, as regrettable for the Church as for the throne.... We would prefer a moderate member of the Italian zelante party, capable of being acceptable to all parties. All we ask of them in our own interest is not to seek to profit from divisions which may occur among our clergy in order to disturb our ecclesiastical affairs."*

*In a confidential letter, written concerning the illness of the new Pope Della Genga, on the 28th of January 1824, I said again to Monsieur le Duc de Laval: "What it is important for us to achieve (supposing a fresh Conclave), is that the Pope, by inclination, should be independent of the other powers; that his policies should be wise and moderate, and that his should be a friend of France."*

*Today, Monsieur le Comte, should I not follow as Ambassador the spirit of the instructions that I gave as Minister?*

*This dispatch says everything. I have nothing more to do but instruct the King succinctly on the workings of the Conclave and any incidents which may occur; it only remains to summarize the votes and the disposition of voting.*

*The Cardinals favorable to the Jesuits are: Giustiniani, Odescalchi, Pedicini and Bertazzoli.*

*The Cardinals opposed to the Jesuits for various reasons and circumstances are: Zurla, De Gregorio, Bernetti, Cappellari, and Micara.*

*I would imagine that, of the fifty-eight Cardinals, forty-eight or forty-nine only will be present at the Conclave. In that case, thirty-three or thirty-four votes would be sufficient to elect a Pope.*



*The Spanish Ambassador, Monsieur de Labrador, a reclusive and secretive man, whom I suspect is light-minded beneath a grave exterior, is very embarrassed by his role. The instructions from his Court did not anticipate the occurrence; he has written in that vein to His Catholic Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Lucca.*

*I have the honor, etc.*

*P.S. Cardinal Benvenuti already has assurance, they say, of twelve votes. That choice, if it were confirmed, would be excellent. Benvenuti knows Europe, and has shown ability and moderation in various posts.*

## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 2

#### Conclaves

Since the Conclave is about to open, I will quickly sketch the history of that great mode of election, which has already operated for more than eighteen hundred years. How did the Papacy originate? How have the Popes been elected through the centuries?

At the time when liberty, equality and the Republic expired around the reign of Augustus, the universal tribune of the nations was born in Bethlehem, that great representative on earth of equality, liberty and the Republic, *Christ*, who having planted the Cross to serve as the boundary of the two worlds, after having been nailed to that Cross, and dying upon it, as the symbol, victim and redeemer of human suffering, transmitted his mantle to his foremost apostle. From Adam to Jesus Christ, it was a society that countenanced slavery, with inequality between men, and social inequality between men and women; from Jesus Christ's to our time it has been a society of equality between men, with social equality of men and women, a society without slavery or at least the principle of slavery. The history of modern society begins at the foot of, and this side of, the Cross.

Peter, Bishop of Rome, initiated the Papacy: as tribune-dictators elected successively from among the people, and for the most part chosen from the most obscure social classes, the Popes took their temporal power from the democratic order, from that new society of brothers founded by Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, the maker of ploughs and yokes, born of woman in respect of the flesh, and yet God and the son of God, as his works show.

The Popes have had a mission to maintain and defend the rights of man; the leaders of human opinion, they acquired, weak as they were, the power to dethrone kings with a word and an idea: as soldiers they had only ordinary men, heads covered with a hood and hands clasping a cross. The Papacy, marching at the head of civilization, advanced towards the goal of society. Christian men, in every quarter of the globe, would obey a priest whose name was scarcely known to them, because that priest was the personification of a fundamental reality; in Europe he represented that political liberty almost everywhere destroyed; in the world of the Goths he was the defender of popular freedoms, as in the modern world he became the preserver of sciences, letters and the arts. People enrolled in his militias in the garb of mendicant brothers.

The quarrel between the Empire and the priesthood is the struggle between two social principles of the Middle Ages, power and liberty. The Popes, favoring the Guelphs, declared themselves for government by the people; the Emperors, adopting the Ghibellines, supported government by the nobility: precisely the roles that the Athenians and Spartans played in Greece. Also, when the Popes ranged themselves on the side of kings, when they became Ghibellines, they lost power, because they were divorced from their natural principle; and, for an opposite reason, though analogous, the monks saw their authority lessen when political freedom was directly returned to the people, because the people no longer needed to be substituted by the monks, their representatives.

Those thrones declared vacant and handed over to the first comer in the Middle Ages; those Emperors who knelt to beg the Pontiff's forgiveness; those kingdoms placed under a ban; a whole nation deprived of religion by a magic word; those sovereigns struck by anathema, abandoned not only by their subjects,

but also their relatives and servants; those princes avoided like lepers, exiled from the eternal race; the food they had tasted, the objects they had touched passed through the flames as tarnished things: all of that was the vigorous effect of popular sovereignty delegated to religion and exercised by it.

The longest-lived electoral process in the world is the system by which the power of the Pontiff has been transmitted by St. Peter to the priest who wears the tiara today: from this priest one can go back, from Pope to Pope, to the saints who were with Christ; in the first link of the Pontifical chain a God resides. The bishops were elected by a general assembly of the faithful; from the time of Tertullian, the Bishop of Rome was made a bishop by other bishops. The clergy joining cause with the people worked together to bring about the election. As passions are met with everywhere, as they harm the finest institutions and the most virtuous characters, to the extent that Papal power increased it tended to bring benefits, and human rivalry then produced great disorder. In pagan Rome, similar troubles broke out during elections of the tribunes: one of the two Gracchi was hurled into the Tiber, the other stabbed to death by a slave, in a wood consecrated to the Furies. The nomination of Pope Damasus, in 366, produced bloodshed: a hundred and thirty seven people died in the Basilica Liberiana, today Santa Maria Maggiore.

Saint Gregory was considered to be elected as Pope by the *clergy*, the *senate* and the *Roman people*. Any Christian man could attain the tiara: Leo IV was promised the sovereign pontificate on the 10th of April 847 for defending Rome against the Saracens, and his ordination postponed until he had shown proof of his courage. Similarly in the creation of other bishops: Simplicius was elevated to the See of Bourges, layman though he was. Even today (something generally unknown) the Conclave's choice could fall on a layman: be he married his wife would enter the religion, and take orders, on his becoming Pope.

The Greek and Latin Emperors wished to constrain the freedom of Papal election by popular vote; they sometimes usurped the right, and often required the election to be confirmed by them as a minimum: an ordinance of Louis the Debonair returned the election of the bishops its ancient freedom which was that it be attained, according to a treaty of the same date, by the *unanimous consent of the clergy and the people*.

The danger of an election proclaimed by the masses or dictated by the Emperor forced a change in the law. In Rome there were priests and deacons known as *cardinals*, their name given to them because they served at the *cornua* or *corners* of the altar, *ad cornua altaris*, or because the word *cardinal* was derived from the Latin *cardo*, a pivot or hinge. Pope Nicholas II, in a council held at Rome in 1059, decided that the Cardinals alone should elect the Pope and the clergy and the people ratify his election. A hundred and twenty years later, the third Lateran Council did away with the ratification by the clergy and the people and rendered the election valid if it gained a majority of two thirds of the votes in the assembly of Cardinals.

But the Council's canon fixing neither the duration nor the form of the Electoral College the result was discord among the electors, and they lacked the means, within those fresh modifications of the law, to put an end to the disorder. In 1268, after the death of Clement IV, the Cardinals meeting in Viterbo could not agree, and the Holy See remained vacant for three years. The Podesta (Chief Magistrate) and the people of the town were obliged to shut the Cardinals in their palace, and even, they say, to remove the roof to force the electors to come to a decision. Gregory X emerged at last from the ballot, and in order to prevent such a problem in future, established from that time on the Conclave CUM *CLAVE*, under lock and key; he regulated the internal organization of the Conclave close to the form in which it exists today: separate cells, a meeting room for the ballot, exterior windows to be blocked up, and the election proclaimed from

one of these, on demolishing the plaster with which it is sealed, etc. The Council held at Lyons in 1274 confirmed and improved these arrangements. Yet one article of the rules has fallen into disuse: it said that if after three days of confinement no candidate had been chosen, for five days after this the Cardinals would have only a single dish at their meal, and for the days following would have only bread, wine and water until the sovereign Pontiff was elected.

Today the duration of the Conclave is no longer limited and a Spartan diet is no longer used to punish the Cardinals like penitent children. Their meals, placed in baskets and carried on trays, arrive before them accompanied by a lackey in livery; a steward follows the convoy, sword at his side, in the emblazoned coach, drawn by caparisoned horses, of one of the imprisoned cardinals. Arriving at the building where the Conclave is being held, the chickens are cut open, the pies drilled, the oranges quartered, and the bottles un-corked, for fear that some Pope might be inside. These ancient customs, some childish, others ridiculous, have their disadvantages. Is the repast sumptuous? Then the poor, dying of hunger, seeing it pass, compare it with their own and mutter. Is the dinner a light one? With a complementary natural reaction, the indigent mock the purple robes with contempt. They would do well to abolish this custom which is no longer current practice; Christianity is returning to its source; it is revisiting the age of Holy Communion and the Agape, and Christ alone should preside today at these feasts.

The intrigues within the Conclaves are notorious: some have had disastrous results. During the schism with the East various Popes and *anti*-Popes cursed and excommunicated one another, from the heights of the ruined walls of Rome. The schism seemed ready to be healed, when Pedro de Luna re-opened it, in 1394, by intrigue at the Conclave in Avignon. Alexander VI, in 1492, bought the votes of twenty two Cardinals who prostituted the tiara to him, leaving behind him the memory of Lucrezia. Sixtus V's only intrigue in the Conclave was to make use of crutches, though when he was Pope his genius had no need of those aids. In a villa in Rome I have seen a portrait of his sister, a woman of the people, whom the terrible Pontiff, in all his plebeian pride, chose to have painted. '*The noblest arms of our House,*' he told his sister, '*are our rags.*'

It was still an age when sovereigns dictated orders to the Sacred College. Philip II sent notes to the Conclave: '*Su Magestad no quiere que N. sea Papa; quiere que N. le tenga: His Majesty does not wish N to be Pope, he wishes N to be such*'. Following this period, intrigues within the Conclave were scarcely more than ripples without specific result. Duperron and d'Ossat nevertheless obtained the reconciliation of Henri IV with the Holy See, which was a great event. Duperron's *Embassies* were somewhat inferior to D'Ossat's *Letters*. Before them, Du Bellay had been involved with trying to prevent the schism with Henry VIII. Having obtained from that tyrant, before his separation from the Church, a promise that he would submit to the judgement of the Holy See, he arrived in Rome at the moment when the condemnation of Henry VIII was about to be pronounced. He obtained a delay in order to send a confidential agent to England; the reply was delayed by the state of the roads. The supporters of Charles V had sentence pronounced, and the bearer of Henry VIII's instructions arrived two days later. A courier's delay ensured England became Protestant, and changed the political landscape of Europe. The world's destiny hangs on things no more weighty: too large a cup, emptied in Babylon, did for Alexander.

Later, Cardinal de Retz, came to Rome, at the time of Olimpia, and in the Conclave following the death of Innocent X, enrolled in the *flying squadron*, a name given to ten independent Cardinals; they brought

with them Sacchetti, only good for having his portrait painted, to elect Alexander VII, *savio col silenzio* (wise and reticent), and who, having become Pope, turned out to be nothing special.

The President de Brosse recounts the death of Clement XII which he witnessed, and he saw the election of Benedict XIV – as I have seen the Pontiff, Leo XII, dead on his bier, abandoned: the Cardinal Camerlingo struck Clement XII on the forehead two or three times according to custom with a little hammer, calling him by his name, *Lorenzo Corsini*: ‘*He did not respond*’ says de Brosse, ‘and the Cardinal quoted: “*That’s what’s making your daughter mute.*”’ And that is how in those days they treated serious matters: a dead Pope one taps on the head as if tapping at the gate of understanding, while calling the deceased and silent man by his name, might, it seems to me, inspire in a witness something other than a jest, even if it was written by Molière. What would the light-minded Magistrate from Dijon have said if Clement XII had replied from the depths of eternity: ‘*What do you want with me?*’

The President de Brosse sent his friend the Abbé Courtois a list of Cardinals attending the Conclave with a few words in honor of each:

*‘Guadagni, a bigot, a hypocrite, lacks wit, lacks taste, a poor monk.*

*Aquaviva d’Aragon, a noble, somewhat heavily built, his wit is like his build.*

*Ottoboni, lacks morals, lacks credit, debauched and ruined, an amateur of the arts.*

*Alberoni, full of fire, agitated, restless, despised, lacks morals, lacks decency, lacks consideration, lacks judgement: according to him, a Cardinal is a wastrel dressed in red.’*

The rest of the list is in keeping; the only wit here is cynicism.

A singular piece of buffoonery took place: de Brosse went to dinner with the English at the Porta San Pancrazio; they acted out the Papal election; Ashewd took off his wig and played the Cardinal-Dean; they chanted their *oremus*, and Cardinal Alberoni was elected by a ballot of the parties. The Protestant soldiers of the army of the Constable de Bourbon had once nominated Martin Luther for Pope, in the Church of St. Peter. Today the English, who are at once Rome’s hurt and its salvation, respect the Catholic religion which has permitted them to inaugurate a chapel outside the Porta del Popolo. The government, and custom, will not accept any greater scandal.

As soon as a Cardinal is enclosed in Conclave, the first thing they do, he and his servants, is to scrape at the freshly plastered walls in the darkness, until they have made a little hole and then dangle strings from it by means of which messages can pass and re-pass between the inside and outside. In addition, Cardinal de Retz, whose opinion is not to be scorned, having spoken of the miseries of the Conclave he had participated in, finished his recital with these fine words:

*‘In the time spent there together (in the Conclave) one always showed the same respect and civility as is seen in the chambers of kings; the same politeness as in the Court of Henri III; the same familiarity as in the colleges; the same modesty found in novices, and the same charity, at least on the surface, as could ever be displayed among brothers in perfect unity.’*

I am struck, in ending this summary of a long history, by the serious manner with which it begins and the atmosphere of burlesque almost with which it ends; the greatness of the Son of God opens the scene

which, diminishing by degrees, the further the Catholic religion is from its source, terminates in the pettiness of the sons of Adam. One scarcely discovers the ancient nobility of the cross except at the death of a Sovereign Pontiff: the Pope, free of family or friends, the body isolated on its bier, shows that the man counts for nothing as head of the Evangelical world. As a temporal Prince, honors are rendered to the dead Pope; as a man, his abandoned corpse is set down at the door of the church, where the sinner once did penance.

BOOK XXX  
CHAPTER 3  
Dispatches and letters

*DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE PORTALIS*

*‘Rome, the 17th of February 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*I am unclear whether the King will be pleased to send a special Ambassador to Rome or whether it may suit him to accredit me to the Sacred College. In the latter case, I would have the honor to observe to you that I allocated to Monsieur le Duc de Laval, in 1823, in similar circumstances, a sum, to defray his exceptional expenditure which, as far as I can remember, amounted to 40,000 to 50,000 francs. The Austrian Ambassador, Count von Nagy-Appony received a sum of 36,000 francs for his initial needs, a supplement of 7,200 francs a month to his normal salary during the Conclave, and for the costs of gifts, the chancellery etc. 10,000 francs. I have no pretensions, Monsieur le Comte, to compete in magnificence with Monsieur the Ambassador of Austria, as Monsieur le Duc de Laval did; I will not be hiring horses, carriages, or livery to dazzle the people of Rome; the King of France is a great enough master to pay for his Ambassador’s pomp if he wishes: borrowed magnificence is wretched. I will go to the Conclave with my people and my ordinary carriages then in a modest manner. It remains to be known whether His Majesty might not think that during the Conclave I might be obliged to put on a display for which my ordinary salary might be inadequate. I am not requesting anything; I am simply submitting a question to your judgement and the Royal decision.*

*I have the honor, etc.’*

*‘Rome, the 19th of February 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*Yesterday, I had the honor of being presented to the Sacred College and giving the little speech of which I sent you an advance copy with my dispatch no. 17, which left Tuesday, the 17th of the month, by special courier. I was heard with signs of satisfaction which augurs well, and the Cardinal-Dean, the venerable La Somaglia replied in terms showing great affection for the King and France.*

*Having fully informed you in my last dispatch, I have absolutely nothing new to tell you today, except that Cardinal Bussi arrived yesterday from Benevento; today we await Cardinals Albani, Macchi and Opizzoni.*

*The members of the Sacred College will be locked in the Quirinal Palace on Monday evening, the 23rd of this month. Ten days are then allowed for the arrival of foreign Cardinals, after which the serious business of the Conclave will commence, and if they agree quickly the Pope could be elected in the first week of Lent.*

*I await, Monsieur le Comte, the King's orders. I assume you sent a courier to me once Monsieur de Montebello reached Paris. It is urgent for me to receive news of an extraordinary ambassador or fresh letters of accreditation for me, with the government's instructions.*

*When will the five French Cardinals arrive? Politically speaking, their presence is hardly necessary here. I have written to Monsignor the Cardinal de Latil to offer him my services in the event that he decides to come.*

*I have the honor, etc.*

*P.S. I enclose a copy of a letter which Monsieur le Comte de Funchal has written to me. I have not replied in writing to the Ambassador, I only intend to speak to him.'*

*TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.*

*'Rome, Monday the 23rd of February 1829.*

*Yesterday the Pope's obsequies ended. The pyramid of paper and the four candelabras were fine, since they were of immense proportions and reached the cornice of the church. The final Dies Irae was admirable. It was composed by an unknown musician belonging to the Pope's chapel, who seemed to me to possess a genius quite different to that of Rossini. Today we pass from sadness to joy; we sing the Veni Creator to open the Conclave; next we shall go each evening to see if the ballot is signaled or not, whether that is the smoke rises from a particular chimney: the day on which there is no smoke, the Pope will be named, and I will come to meet you once more; that will be the end of my business here. The King of England's speech is very offensive to France! What a deplorable expedition this one to the Morea! Has that been understood yet? General Guilleminot has written me a letter on the matter, which made me smile; he could only write to me thus because he thinks I am still a Minister.'*

*'25th of February.*

*Death is here; Torlonia departed yesterday evening after two days of illness: I have seen him 'all made up' on his funeral bier, sword at his side. He granted loans against securities; but what securities! Against antiques, paintings hung pell-mell in an old dusty palace. Not the shop though where The Miser kept a lute from Bologna furnished with all its strings, or nearly all, a lizard's skin three feet long, and a four poster bed decorated with Hungarian lace.*

*One sees only the dying whom they take out for walks in the street fully dressed; one of them passes regularly beneath my windows whenever we sit down to dinner. Moreover, everything announces a spring departure; people are beginning to disperse; they are leaving for Naples; they will return for a while for Holy Week, and then depart for good. Next year there will be other visitors, other faces, and another society. There is something sad in this scurrying through the ruins: the inhabitants of Rome are like the debris of their city: the world passes by at their feet. I imagine people returning to their families in various European countries, young Misses returning in the midst of fog. If by chance, thirty years from now, one of them was brought to Italy, who would remember having seen them in this Palace whose masters no longer exist? St. Peter's and the Coliseum; that is all they themselves would recognize.'*



## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 4

Further dispatches and letters

#### *DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE DE PORTALIS.*

*‘Rome, this 3rd of March 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*My first courier having arrived at Lyons on the 14th of last month at nine in the evening, you will have learnt on the morning of the 15th, by telegraph, of the Pope's death. It is now the 3rd of March and I am still awaiting instructions or any official reply. The newspapers have announced the departure of two or three Cardinals. I have written to Paris to Monsieur le Cardinal de Latil, in order to place the Ambassadorial palace at his disposal; I have just written again to various points on his route, to renew the offer.*

*I am sorry to have to tell you, Monsieur le Comte, that I notice various petty intrigues here aimed at removing our Cardinals from the Embassy, in order to lodge them so that they can be placed nearer to the influences they hope to exert on them.*

*As far as I am concerned, it is for the most part a matter for indifference. I will render Messieurs les Cardinals all the services in my power. If they interrogate me on issues which it would be useful to know about, I will tell them what I know; if you transmit the King's orders for them via myself, I will inform them of such; but if they arrive here in a hostile frame of mind towards the views of His Majesty's government, if it is seen that they are not in agreement with the King's Ambassador, if they use language contrary to mine, if they go as far as to show their support in the Conclave for any extreme individual, even if they are only divided among themselves, nothing would be more disastrous. It would be better for the King's service if I gave my resignation instantly than offer up our disagreements to a public spectacle. Austria and Spain, in their relationship with the clergy behave so as to leave no opening for intrigue. No priest, no Austrian or Spanish Cardinal or Bishop, is allowed an agent or correspondent in Rome other than the Ambassador belonging to his Court; the latter has the right to dismiss instantly from Rome any ecclesiastic of his nation who presents an obstacle to him.*

*I hope, Monsieur le Comte, that no division will occur, that Messieurs the Cardinals will show the positive desire to submit to the instructions which I will not be long in receiving from you; and that I will know which of them is charged with exercising the veto, if needed, and to which names the veto may be applied.*

*It is necessary to be very careful: the last few ballots have shown an awakening of party allegiance. That party, which has given twenty to twenty-one votes to Cardinals Della Marmora and Pedicini, forms what they call here the Sardinian faction. The other Cardinals, taking fright, wish to give all their votes to Opizzoni, an individual both firm and moderate. Though Austrian, that is to say from Milan, he has stood up to Austria in Bologna. He would be an excellent choice. The votes of the French Cardinals, in fixing on one or the other candidate, could decide the election. Rightly or wrongly, it is believed the*

Cardinals are opposed to the King's present system of government, and the Sardinian faction is counting on them.

*I have the honor, etc.'*

TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.

*'Rome, the 3rd of March 1829.*

*You surprise me regarding the story of my excavations; I did not remember writing you anything so fine in regard of them. I am, as you can imagine, greatly pre-occupied: left without direction or instructions, I am obliged to take everything upon myself. I think however that I can promise you a moderate and enlightened Pope. God grant only that it may be over by the expiry of the interim period of Monsieur de Portalis' Ministry.'*

*'4th of March.*

*Yesterday, Ash Wednesday, I knelt alone in that church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, supported by the walls of Rome, near to Porta Maggiore. I heard the monotonous and dismal chanting of the monks in the interior of that solitary space: I would have liked to have been dressed in a robe too, chanting among the ruins. What better place to subdue ambition and contemplate the vanities of this world! I do not speak to you about my health because it is extremely tedious. While I am suffering, they tell me Monsieur de La Ferronays is cured; he rides on horseback, and his convalescence is regarded here as a miracle: God grant he remains so, and takes up the portfolio at the end of the interim period: how many matters that would solve, for me!'*

DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE PORTALIS.

*'Rome, this 15th of March 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*I have the honor to inform you of the successive arrivals of Messieurs the French Cardinals. Three of them, Messieurs de Latil, de La Fare, and de Croy, are doing me the honor of staying with me. The first entered the Conclave on Thursday evening the 12th, with Monsieur le Cardinal Isoard; the two others were incarcerated on Friday evening, the 13th.*

*I have informed them of everything I know; I have communicated to them important notes on the minority and majority factions of the Conclave, and the sentiments with which the various parties are animated. We are agreed that they would support the candidates of whom I have spoken to you, namely: Cardinals Capellari, Opizzoni, Benvenuti, Zurla, Castiglioni, lastly Pacca and De Gregorio; and that they would reject the Cardinals of the Sardinian faction: Pedicini, Giustiniani, Galeffi and Cristaldi.*

*I hope that this good relationship between the Ambassadors and the Cardinals will produce the right result: at least I shall have nothing to reproach myself with if passions or interests rob me of my hopes.*

*I have discovered, Monsieur le Comte, despicable and dangerous intrigue between Paris and Rome being conducted through the channel of Monsieur the Nuncio Lambruschini. It is a matter of nothing less than having had read out in open Conclave a copy of supposed instructions, divided into several articles and given (it was impudently claimed) to Monsieur le Cardinal de Latil. The majority of the Conclave declared itself vigorously against such machinations; they would have liked the Nuncio to be told to break off all relations with the troublemakers who, by disturbing France, would end by making the Catholic religion odious to all. I have made a collection, Monsieur le Comte, of these authentic revelations, and I will send them to you after the Pope's nomination: that would be better than any amount of dispatches. The king will learn to know his friends and enemies, and the Government will be able to rely on proper facts to direct its actions.*

*Your dispatch no.14 advised me of the attempts at ecclesiastical encroachment which His Holiness' Nuncio wished to renew in France on the death of Leo XII. The same thing happened when I was Foreign Minister on the death of Pius VII; happily there is always a mean of defence against these public attacks; it is much more difficult to escape designs woven in the shadows.*

*The Conclavists who accompany our Cardinals seem reasonable men: only Abbé Coudrin, whom you spoke to me about, is one of those dull narrow minds into which nothing can enter, one of those men who have mistaken their calling. You are not unaware that he is a monk, the head of his order, and that he even issues institutional bulls: it is scarcely in accord with our civil laws and our political institutions.*

*It could be that the Pope has been elected by the end of this week. But if the French Cardinals fail of the first effects of their presence, it will be impossible to assign a limit to the Conclave. Fresh alignments might lead to an unexpected nomination: in order to conclude, they might agree on an insignificant Cardinal, such as Dandini.*

*I have formerly, Monsieur le Comte, found myself in difficult circumstances, as Ambassador to London, as Minister during the Spanish War, as a member of the Chamber of Peers, as leader of the Opposition; but nothing has given me as much worry and concern as my present position in the midst of all kinds of intrigue. I have to work on an invisible body shut in a prison whose environs are strictly guarded. I have neither money to grant nor places to promise; the precarious passions of fifty or so old men offer me no hold. I have to combat stupidity in some, and ignorance of the present-day in others; fanaticism in this group, shrewdness and duplicity in that; in almost all of them ambition, interest, political hatreds, and I am isolated from them by the walls and the mysteries of their gathering in which so many divisive elements ferment. At every instant the landscape changes; every quarter of an hour contradictory reports plunge me in fresh perplexities. It is not, Monsieur le Comte, to stress my worth that I tell you of all these difficulties, but to serve as my excuse in the event that the election produces a Pope contrary to that which it appears to promise and to the nature of our wishes. On the death of Pius VII, religious questions had not yet aroused public opinion: those questions have today become involved in politics, and never has the election of a Head of the Church fallen at a more inappropriate time.*

*I have the honor, etc.*

TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.

'Rome, the 17th of March 1829.

*The King of Bavaria came to see me in his morning-coat. We spoke of you. This Greek sovereign, in wearing a crown, seems to know what he has on his head, and to understand that you cannot nail time to the past. He dines with me on Thursday and does not want anyone else.*

*As for the rest, here we are in the midst of great events: a Pope to be elected; who will it be? Will the Catholic Emancipation Bill be passed? A new campaign in the East; whose will be the victory? Will we profit from our situation? Who will conduct our affairs? Is there a mind capable of seeing all that exists in it for France and profiting according to circumstances? I am sure it is not the only thing they think about in Paris, and that between the salons and the Chambers, pleasure and law-making, the delights of the world, and Ministerial anxieties, they have little concern for Europe. It is only I, in my exile, who have the time to dream idly and look around me. Yesterday I went for a walk in a kind of storm along the ancient Tivoli road. I arrived at ancient Roman paving so well preserved one might have thought it only just put down. Horace may have trod the stones on which I walked; where is Horace now?’*

## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 5

The Marquis Capponi, letters and a dispatch

The Marquis Capponi arriving from Florence has brought me letters of recommendation from his female friends in Paris. I replied to one of these letters on the 21st of March 1829:

*‘I have received both your letters; the services I can render you are trivial, but I am always at your command. I was not to be told what the Marquis Capponi was like: I tell you that he is always excellent; he has held fair in contrast to the weather. I did not reply to your first letter so full of enthusiasm for the sublime Mahmud and his disciplined barbarians, those slaves beaten into soldiers. That women might be transported with admiration for men who marry hundreds at a time, and might take that for enlightened and civilized progress, I can conceive; but I hold fast to my poor Greeks; I wish for their liberty as I do that of France; I also desire frontiers that will protect Paris, and assure our independence, and it is not by means of the triple alliance of Constantinople’s impalements, Vienna’s canes, and London’s fists that you will win the banks of the Rhine. Small thanks for the cloak of honor that our glory could obtain from the invincible leader of the true believers, who has not yet emerged from the surroundings of his seraglio: I prefer that glory naked; she is feminine and beautiful: Phidias would have taken great care not to give her a Turkish dressing gown.’*

TO MADAME RÉCAMIER

*‘Rome, the 21st of March 1829.*

*Well! I am right, not you! Yesterday I went to Sant’Onofrio, between two ballots, while waiting for a Pope: there are two orange trees in the cloister, the green oak is elsewhere. I am quite proud that my recollection was correct. I hastened, almost eyes closed, to the little stone which covers your friend; I prefer it to the grand tomb they are going to raise for him. What delightful solitude! What a wonderful view! What happiness to rest there between frescoes by Domenichino and those of Leonardo da Vinci! I would like to stay there: I have never been more tempted. Were you allowed to enter the interior of the monastery? Did you see, down a long corridor, that ravishing head, though almost half-effaced, of a Leonardo Madonna? Did you see in the library Tasso’s death-mask, his withered crown of laurel, a mirror he used, his writing case, his pen and a letter in his handwriting, placed on a shelf below his bust? In the letter in small faded writing, but easy to read, he speaks of friendship and the winds of fortune; the latter scarcely blew favorably for him, and friendship often failed him.*

*No Pope yet, we await one from hour to hour; but if the choice has been delayed, if obstacles are raised on every side, it is not my fault: they should have listened to me a bit more and not acted in almost a contrary manner to what they seem to want. For the rest, it seems to me that at present all the world wants to be at peace with me. The Cardinal de Clermont-Tonnerre himself has just written to me requesting my former kindness towards him, and then that he is to stay with me, and is resolved to vote for the most moderate Pope.*

*You have read my second speech. Thank Monsieur Kératry who spoke so obligingly about the first; I hope he will be more pleased still with the other. We are both trying to bring back Christian liberty, and*

we will succeed. What do you think of the response Cardinal Castiglioni made? Was I praised enough in open Conclave? You could not have done better in your days of flattery.'

'24th of March 1829.

'If I were to believe the rumors in Rome, we shall have a Pope tomorrow; but I am discouraged at the moment, and do not choose to believe such happiness. You surely understand that the happiness I speak of is not a political one, the joy of triumph, but the happiness of being free and meeting you once more. If I talk to you about the Conclave so much, I am like a man with an obsession who thinks the world is only concerned with his obsession. And yet, who thinks of the Conclave in Paris, who cares about the Pope and my tribulations? French levity, the interests of the moment, the debates in the Chambers, the stir of ambition, provide other things to worry about. When the Duc de Laval wrote to me of his concerns about the Conclave, preoccupied as I was with the War in Spain, I said on receiving his dispatches: Oh! Good God, it's hardly the time to be worrying about that!! Monsieur Portalis today ought to subject me to a like sentence. Yet it is true to say that things at that time were not as they are today: religious ideas were not confounded with political ideas as they are all over Europe; the dispute was not there; the nomination of a Pope could not, as now, disturb or calm the nations.

Since the letter which told me of the extension to Monsieur de La Feronnays' leave and his departure for Rome, I have heard nothing: yet I think the news is true.

Monsieur Thierry has written me a moving letter from Hyères; he tells me he is dying, and yet he wants a place in the Académie des Inscriptions and asks me to write on his behalf. I will do so. My excavation continues to yield sarcophagi; the dead can only provide us with what they have. The Poussin monument advances. It will be great and noble. You would not believe how much the painting of the Shepherds in Arcady was made for bas-relief and how suitable it is for sculpture.'

'28th of March.

'Monsieur le Cardinal de Clermont-Tonnerre, who is staying with me, entered Conclave today; it is the age of miracles. I have with me Marshal Lannes' son and the Chancellor's grandson; gentlemen of Le Constitutionnel dine at my table next to gentlemen of La Quotidienne. That is the benefit of being sincere; I allow each to think as he wishes, so long as they accord me the same freedom. I merely try to ensure my opinion retains the majority, since I find it, with reason, better than others. It is to my sincerity that I attribute the tendency for the most divergent opinions to cluster about me. I exercise right of sanctuary towards them: no one can arrest them under my roof.'

TO MONSIEUR LE DUC DE BLACAS.

'Rome, the 24th of March 1829.

I am truly annoyed, Monsieur le Duc, that a sentence in my letter could have caused you any distress. I have no complaint at all to make of a man of sense and intelligence (Monsieur Fuscaldo) who only speaks diplomatic commonplaces to me. Do we Ambassadors speak of anything else? As for the Cardinal whom you did me the honor of mentioning, the French government has not designated any particular individual; it is relying entirely on what I have said. Seven or eight moderate and peaceable Cardinals, who seem to be attracting the support of all the Courts, are the candidates among whom we

*hope to see the votes cast. But if we have no pretensions to impose a choice on the majority of the Conclave, we will oppose with all our powers and by any means the three or four extreme Cardinals, inept or involved in intrigue, supported by a minority.*

*I have no means, Monsieur le Duc, of transmitting this letter to you; so I will simply put it in the post, since it contains nothing that you or I would not admit to in public.*

*I have the honor, etc.'*

TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.

*'Rome, the 31st of March 1829.*

*Monsieur de Montebello has arrived and has brought me your letter with letters from Monsieur Bertin and Monsieur Villemain.*

*My excavation goes well, I have found plenty of empty sarcophagi; I can choose one of them for myself, without which my dust will be forced to follow that of the ancient dead which the wind has already dispersed. Bodiless sepulchres offer the suggestion of resurrection and yet they only await a more profound death. It is not life but nothingness that has left these tombs deserted.*

*To complete my little diary of the moment, I will tell you that the day before yesterday I climbed to the ball on the top of St Peter's during a storm. You cannot imagine the roar of the wind from the depths of the sky, round Michelangelo's cupola, and above that temple of the Christians, which erased ancient Rome.'*

*'31st of March, evening.*

*Victory! I have one of the Popes whom I placed on my list: it is Castiglioni, the very Cardinal I supported for the Papacy in 1823, when I was Minister, he who has replied to me recently in this Conclave of 1829, giving me plenty of praise. Castiglioni is a moderate and devoted to France: it is a complete triumph. The Conclave, before dispersing, has ordained that the Nuncio in Paris be asked to express to the King the satisfaction the Sacred College has found in my conduct. I have already sent the news to Paris by telegraph. The Prefect of the Rhône is the intermediary in this aerial correspondence, and that prefect is Monsieur de Brosse, the son of that Comte de Brosse, the flippant traveller to Rome, often cited in the notes I gather while writing to you. The courier who brings you this letter carries my dispatch to Monsieur Portalis.*

*I no longer have two days of good health together; and that enrages me, since I have energy for nothing in the midst of my woes. Yet I await with some impatience the results of the Pope's nomination in Paris, what will be said, what will be done, what will become of me. The most certain is the leave I asked for. I have seen in the newspapers the fine dispute the Constitutionnel has started regarding my speech; it accuses the Messager of not having printed it, and yet in Rome we have the Messager of the 24th of March (the dispute began on the 24th and 25th) which carried the speech. Is that not odd? It seems clear that there were two editions, one for Rome and the other for Paris. Poor people! I am thinking of the setback to another paper; it assures us that the Conclave would have been very dissatisfied*

*with the speech: what will it say when it sees the praise that Cardinal Castiglioni, who has been made Pope, bestowed on me?*

*When will I be able to stop talking to you about all this wretched stuff? When will I be free to do no more than finish the memoirs of my life and my life with them, with the last page of my Memoirs? I have much need of it; I am very weary, the burden of years increases and weighs on my brow; I amuse myself by calling it rheumatism, but one is not cured of this disease. A single word sustains me, I keep repeating: "Soon."*

*'3rd of April.*

*I forget to tell you that since Cardinal Fesch behaved very well in the Conclave, and voted with our Cardinals, I have made an approach and invited him to dinner. He has refused in a note full of moderation.'*

*DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE PORTALIS.*

*'Rome, this 2nd of April; 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*Cardinal Albani has been named as Secretary of State, as I had the honor of informing you in my first letter which was carried to Lyons by the mounted courier sent on the evening of the 31st of March. The new Minister displeases both the Sardinian faction, the majority in the Sacred College, and even Austria, because he is a violent anti-Jesuit, harsh in manner, and an Italian before everything. Rich and exceedingly avaricious, Cardinal Albani is mixed up in all sorts of enterprises and speculations. I went to visit him for the first time yesterday; as soon as he saw me, he cried: "I am a pig! (He was indeed very dirty.) You can see I am no enemy." I inform you, Monsieur le Comte, of his very words. I replied that I was far from regarding him as an enemy. "It is water not fire that is needed for your people", he continued: "do I not know your country? Have I not lived in France? (He speaks French like a Frenchman). You will be content and your master too. How is the King? Good day! Let us go to St Peter's."*

*It was eight in the morning; I had already seen His Holiness and all Rome was hurrying to the ceremony of adoration.*

*Cardinal Albani is a man of spirit, false of character, yet of an open humor; his violence foils his cunning; one can take advantage of him by flattering his pride and satisfying his avarice.*

*Pius VIII is very knowledgeable, especially on theological matters; he speaks French, but with less grace and facility than Leo XII. He is afflicted by a semi-paralysis of his right side and subject to convulsive movements: supreme power will heal him. He will be crowned next Sunday, the 5th of April, Passion Sunday.*

*Now that the main business which kept me in Rome is concluded, Monsieur le Comte, I would be infinitely obliged if you would obtain a few months leave of absence for me, with His Majesty's blessing. I would not employ it until after handing Pius VIII the letter which His Majesty will send in reply to that which Pius VIII has written or is about to write to him, to announce his elevation to the chair of St Peter. Allow*



*me to solicit anew on behalf of my two secretaries to the legation, Monsieur Bellocq and Monsieur de Givré, the favor towards them that I previously sought of you.*

*Cardinal Albani's intrigues in the Conclave, the supporters he acquired, even among the majority, made me fear some unexpected coup which would carry him to the sovereign Pontificate. It seemed unacceptable to me to allow him to surprise us thus and allow the Austrian Chargé d'Affairs to place the tiara on his head under the eyes of the French Ambassador: I profited then from the arrival of Monsieur le Cardinal de Clermont-Tonnerre, charging him, at all events, with the enclosed letter in which I made those arrangements within my responsibility. Happily he did not have to make use of the letter in the matter; he returned it to me and I have the honor of sending it to you.*

*I have the honor, etc., etc.'*

## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 6

Further letters and dispatches

TO HIS EMINENCE Monsieur le Cardinal de Clermont-Tonnerre.

*‘Rome, this 28th of March 1829.*

*No longer being able to communicate with your colleagues the French Cardinals who are enclosed in the palace of Monte-Cavallo (Quirinal); being obliged to make plans in the interests of our country and to the benefit of the King’s service; knowing how often unexpected nominations have arisen in previous Conclaves, I regret the unfortunate necessity of entrusting Your Eminence with a potential veto.*

*Though Monsieur le Cardinal Albani seems to have no chance, he is nevertheless a man of ability, on whom, in a prolonged dispute, one might cast one’s eyes; but he is the Cardinal charged in Conclave with instructions from Austria; Monsieur le Comte de Lutzw, in his speech, officially designated him in that role. Now, it is impossible to allow a Cardinal with overt allegiance to a court, to the French court no more than to any other, to attain the Sovereign Pontificate.*

*In consequence, Monsignor, I charge you, by virtue of my full powers, as Ambassador of His Very Christian Majesty, and taking upon myself the whole responsibility, to exercise the veto against Monsieur le Cardinal Albani, if by a gathering in his favor on the one hand, or by a secret alignment on the other, he happens to gain a majority of votes.*

*I am etc., etc.’*

This letter regarding the veto, confided to a Cardinal by an Ambassador who is not formally authorized to do so, is rash diplomacy: there is something in doing so which makes all Statesmen at home tremble, all the heads of departments, all the chief clerks, all the copyists in the Foreign Ministry; but since the Minister ignored the matter to the point of not even considering the possible use of the veto, I was forced to think about it for him. Suppose Albani had by chance been named Pope, what would have happened to me? I would have been consigned to oblivion as a politician.

I say this not for myself who care little for fame as a politician, but for future generations of writers to whom rumors of my mishap would carry and who would expiate my misfortune at the expense of their careers, as they whip his scapegoat (*menin*) when Monsieur the Dauphin has made a mistake. But my daring foresight, in taking the letter of exclusion upon myself, should not be admired over-much; what seemed an enormity, measured on the petty scale of ancient diplomatic thinking, was at bottom nothing at all in the order of actual society. That daring arose, on the one hand, from my insensibility to all disgrace, and on the other from my knowledge of current opinion: the world such as it is constituted today does not give two *sous* for the nomination of a pope, the rivalry of courts and the intrigues inside a Conclave.

*DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE PORTALIS.*

*‘Confidential.*

*Rome, this 2nd of April 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*I have the honor to send you today the important documents which I told you of. They are nothing less than the official and private diary of the Conclave. They are translated word for word from the original Italian; I have only removed anything that might indicate too precisely the sources I have obtained them from. If the least part of these revelations, which are perhaps unique, ever gets out, it would cost the fortunes, freedom and lives of several individuals. That would be all the more regrettable in that these revelations are not the result of interest or corruption but are owed to confidence in French honor. These items then, Monsieur le Comte, must remain forever secret, after they have been read in the King's council: for, despite the precautions I have taken to suppress the names and remove direct references, there is still enough in them to compromise their originators. I enclose a commentary, in order to aid in reading. The Pontifical government is accustomed to keeping a register where decisions, gestures and actions are noted from day to day, and so to speak from hour to hour; what historical riches if one searched among them back to the first centuries of the Papacy! It has been half-opened to me for an instant of time now. The King will see, from the documents I send you, what has never been seen before, the internal workings of a Conclave; the most intimate sentiments of the court of Rome may be known from it, and thus His Majesty's ministers will not work in the dark.*

*The commentary on the diary, which I have written, frees me from any further reflection, and it only remains for me to offer you fresh assurance of the high consideration with which I have the honor, etc., etc.'*

The original Italian of the precious document mentioned in this confidential dispatch was burnt before my eyes here in Rome; I have kept no copy of the translation of the document which I sent to the Foreign Ministry, I have only a copy of the *commentary* or the *remarks* enclosed with the translation. But the same discretion which made me recommend that the Minister keep the documents forever secret obliges me to suppress my own remarks here; since, whatever the obscurity those remarks are enveloped in, due to the absence of the document to which they refer, that obscurity would still be penetrable in Rome. Now, resentment endures in the Eternal City; it might be that fifty years from now they would attack some great-nephew of the authors of this mysterious confidence. I will therefore content myself with giving a *general survey* of the contents of the *commentary*, stressing those passages which directly relate to the affairs of France.

Firstly one can see how the court of Naples deceived Monsieur de Blacas, or how it was itself deceived; for, while I was being told that the Neapolitan Cardinals would vote with us, they joined with the minority or Sardinian faction.

The minority of Cardinals imagined that the vote of the French Cardinals would have an influence on the shape of our government. How could that be? Apparently because of the secret orders with which they assumed they had been entrusted and because of their votes in favor of an extremist Pope.

Lambruschini, the Nuncio, asserted in Conclave that Cardinal de Latil had the King's confidence: all the faction's efforts were aimed at having it believed that Charles X and his government were not in accord.

On the 13th of March, Cardinal de Latil announced that he needed to make a declaration to the Conclave, *purely* as a matter of conscience; he was sent before four Cardinal-Bishops: the notes of this

secret confession remain in the keeping of the Grand-Confessor. The other French Cardinals knew nothing of the contents of the Cardinal's confession and Cardinal Albani tried in vain to discover them: the action is important and curious.

The minority composed sixteen solid votes. The Cardinals in that minority called themselves the *Fathers of the Cross*; they set a St. Andrew Cross over their doorways to announce that, determined on their choice, they did not wish to discuss it with anyone. The majority of the Conclave displayed reasonable opinions and the firm resolution not to be involved in any way in foreign politics.

The minutes drawn up by the notary to the Conclave are worthy of note: 'Pius VIII,' they say in conclusion, '*was determined to nominate Cardinal Albani as Secretary of State, in order to satisfy the Vienna Cabinet as well.*' The sovereign Pontiff shared the prizes between the two courts; he declared himself as Pope for France, and gave Austria the Secretary of State.

TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.

'Rome, Wednesday the 8th of April 1829.

*'This very day I gave a dinner for the whole Conclave. Tomorrow I welcome the Grand-Duchess Helen. On Easter Tuesday, I have a ball to celebrate the end of the session; and then I will prepare to come and see you; judge my anxiety; at the instant I write to you, I still have no news of my mounted courier carrying the announcement of the Pope's death, and yet the new Pope has already been crowned, and Leo XII is forgotten; I have started business with the new Secretary of State Albani; everything goes on as if nothing had happened, and I am not sure if you even know in Paris that there is a new Pontiff! How fine this ceremony of the Papal blessing is! The Sabine Hills on the horizon, then the empty countryside of Rome, then Rome herself, then St Peter's Square and all the people on their knees beneath an old man's hand: the Pope is the only Prince who blesses his subjects.*

*I was thus far with my letter when a courier arriving from Genoa for me brought me a telegraph dispatch from Paris to Toulon, which dispatch, replying to the one I had sent, tells me that on the 4th of April, at eleven in the morning, my telegraph dispatch from Rome to Toulon was received in Paris, the dispatch which announced the nomination of Cardinal Castiglioni, and that the King is very pleased.*

*The rapidity of these communications is prodigious; my courier left on the 31st of March, at eight in the evening, and on the 8th of April, at eight in the evening, I receive a reply from Paris.'*

'11th of April 1829.

*Here we are at the 11th of April: in eight days' time it will be Easter, in fifteen days my leave will start, and then I will see you! Everything vanishes before that hope; I am no longer sad; I no longer think of Ministers and politics. Tomorrow Holy Week begins. I will think of all you have said to me. If only you were here to listen to the lovely songs of mourning with me! We would go and walk in the wastes of the Roman Campagna, covered now with verdure and flowers. All the ruins seem re-born with the spring; I am one of them.'*

'Holy Wednesday, the 15th of April.

*I have left the Sistine Chapel, having been present at Tenebrae and listened to the singing of the Miserere. I remember you speaking to me about that ceremony and because of it I was a hundred times more moved.*

*The day faded; the shadows slowly covered the Chapel frescoes and one could no longer see the mighty traces of Michelangelo's brush. The candles, extinguished one by one, allowed a little white smoke to escape from their doused flames, a natural enough symbol of this life that Scripture compares to a little cloud. The Cardinals were kneeling, the new Pope prostrate before the same altar where I had seen his predecessor a few days ago; the fine prayer of penitence and mercy, which followed the Lamentations of the prophet, rose at intervals through the silence and the night. One felt overwhelmed by the great mystery of a God dying to redeem mankind's sins. The Catholic heritage with all its memories was there, on the seven hills; but, instead of those powerful Pontiffs, those Cardinals who disputed precedence with monarchs, a poor old paralyzed Pope, without family or support, princes of a Church lacking in splendor, announced the end of the power which civilized the modern world. The masterpieces of art vanished with it, fading on the walls and vaults of the Vatican, a half deserted palace. Curious foreigners divorced from the unity of the Church, were present in passing at the ceremony and replaced the community of the faithful. A dual sadness gripped the heart. Christian Rome while commemorating the agony of Jesus Christ seemed to be celebrating its own, repeating for the New Jerusalem the words Jeremiah addressed to the Old. It is a fine thing if Rome in order to forget everything, scorns everything and dies.'*

*DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE PORTALIS.*

*'Rome, this 16th of April 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*Things are developing here, as I had the honor to prophesy to you; the words and actions of the new Sovereign Pontiff are perfectly in accord with the policy of moderation followed by Leo XII: Pius VIII goes further even than his predecessor; he expresses himself with great frankness on the subject of the Charter a word which he does not hesitate to pronounce and counsels the French to follow its spirit. The Nuncio, having continued to write about our affairs, took the order to confine himself to his own badly. Everything has been resolved regarding the Concordat with Holland, and Monsieur le Comte de Celles ends his mission here next month.*

*Cardinal Albani, in a difficult position, is obliged to make expiation: the protestations he makes me regarding his devotion to France annoy the Austrian Ambassador who cannot hide his ill-humor. As far as religious relations are concerned we have nothing to fear from Cardinal Albani; not very religious himself, he will not trouble us either by his own extremism, or the moderate opinion of his master.*

*As for political relations, they cannot manipulate Italy today through police intrigue and coded correspondence; let them occupy the legations, or put an Austrian garrison into Ancona on some pretext or other, that would be to stir up Europe and declare war on France: well we are no longer in 1814, 1815, 1816, or 1817; a greedy and unjust ambition cannot be gratified in front of our eyes with impunity. So, Cardinal Albani may receive a pension from Prince von Metternich; he may be a relative of the Duke of Modena, to whom he intends to leave his enormous fortune; he may be spinning some little plot with*

*that prince against the heir to the crown of Sardinia; all that is true, all that would have been dangerous in an age when private and absolute governments might set soldiers on the march in secret, pursuing secret instructions: but today, with public government, with freedom of speech and the Press, with the telegraph and the speed of all communications, with the knowledge of affairs that has spread through every social class, we are protected from the sleights of hand and trickery of the old diplomacy. However, it should not be concealed that an Austrian Chargé d’Affaires, Secretary of State to Rome, presents difficulties; there are certain notes indeed (for example those which related to Imperial power in Italy) which should not be placed in Cardinal Albani’s hands.*

*No one has yet been able to penetrate the secret of a nomination which displeased everybody, even the Vienna Cabinet. Is it to do with foreign political interests? We are assured that Cardinal Albani is currently offering to advance the Holy Father 200,000 piastres which the government of Rome needs; others claim that the sum was loaned by an Austrian banker. Cardinal Macchi told me last Saturday that His Holiness not wishing to take back Cardinal Bernetti and desiring nevertheless to give him a senior position, could find no other means of arranging the matter than making the Bologna legation available. Wretched embarrassment often provides the motive for the most important decisions. If Cardinal Macchi’s version is true, everything said by Pius VIII to satisfy the courts of France and Austria is no more than a superficial justification, with the aid of which he seeks to hide his own weakness from himself. For the rest, no one thinks Albani’s Ministry will last long. As soon as he opens up relations with the Ambassadors, difficulties will arise on all sides.*

*As for the state of Italy, Monsieur le Comte, one should read with caution what is said to you by those in Naples or elsewhere. It is unfortunately only too true that the government of the Two Sicilies has fallen into utter contempt. The manner in which the court lives, surrounded by guards, ever-trembling, ever pursued by phantom fears, offering to the view nothing but gibbets and ruinous hunts, is contributing more and more in that country to the debasing of royalty. What are taken for conspiracies are only symptoms of a general malaise, the product of the century, the struggle of the former society with the new, the combat of old decrepit institutions against the energy of the younger generations; ultimately, the comparison everyone makes between what is and what might be. Let us not conceal the fact that the great spectacle of a powerful France, free and happy, that great spectacle striking the eyes of nations remaining or fallen beneath the yoke, excites dismay or nourishes hope. The blend of representative governments and absolute monarchies cannot last; one or the other must perish, so that politics can achieve balance as in Medieval Europe. A frontier-post can no longer separate freedom from slavery; a man can no longer be hung on one side of a river for principles held sacred on the other side of the same river. It is in that sense, Monsieur le Comte, and only in that sense, that there are conspiracies in Italy; it is again in that sense that Italy is French. The day when she begins to enjoy the rights that her enlightened minds perceive and that the march of progress brings towards her, she will be calm and purely Italian. It is not a few poor devils of carbonari, excited by the maneuvering of the police, and sent to the gallows without mercy, that will rouse this country. Governments gain the most deluded ideas concerning the true state of things; they are prevented from doing what must be done for their own security, by having revealed to them as a specific conspiracy by a pack of Jacobins what is in effect a permanent and general cause.*

*Such, Monsieur le Comte, is the true position of Italy: each of her States, besides the mutual efforts of spirited men, is tormented by some local malady: Piedmont is in the hands of an extreme*

*faction; Milan is devoured by the Austrians; the domains of the Holy Father are being ruined by poor financial administration.; taxes have been raised to close to fifty millions and leave proprietors only one per cent of their revenues; customs charges bring in hardly anything; smuggling is rife; the Prince of Modena in his Duchy has established (instead of exemption from all former abuses) stores of banned merchandise, which he ships at night into the Bologna legation.*

*I have already spoken to you of Naples, Monsieur le Comte, where a weak government only survives because of the cowardice of the people.*

*It is this absence of military virtue which will prolong Italy's agonies. Bonaparte did not have the time to recreate that virtue in the land of Caesar and Marius. The habits of an idle existence and a delightful climate still contribute to robbing the southern Italians of the desire to improve matters. Antipathies born of territorial divisions add to the difficulties of movement in the interior; but if some impulse came from outside, or if some prince this side of the Alps granted his subjects a charter, a revolution would occur, because everything is ripening towards that revolution. Happier than us and instructed by our experience, thrifty nations can see the crimes and misfortunes of which we have been so prodigal.*

*I will doubtless soon receive, Monsieur le Comte, the notice of leave I asked for: perhaps I may use it. On the verge then of leaving Italy, I thought I should place before your eyes a few general insights, to assist the ideas of the King's council and enable them to guard against the reports of narrow-minded spirits or blind passion.*

*I have the honor, etc., etc.'*

*'Rome, this 16th of April 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*Messieurs the French Cardinals are anxious to know what sum they will be accorded for their maintenance and expenses in Rome: they have asked me several times to write to you about the matter; I will thus be infinitely obliged if you will advise me as early as possible of the King's decision.*

*Regarding my own affairs, Monsieur le Comte, when you chose to award me a salary of thirty thousand francs, you assumed I would not have a Cardinal staying with me: now, Monsieur le Cardinal de Clermont-Tonnerre and his suite are living here, comprising two conclavists, an ecclesiastical secretary, a lay secretary, a valet, two servants and a French cook, then a Roman house manager, a master of ceremonies, three footmen, a coachman, and all the Italian household a Cardinal is obliged to maintain here. Monsieur the Archbishop of Toulouse who cannot walk does not dine at my table; he has two or three sittings at various hours, and carriages and horses for his friends and table companions. My honest guest will certainly not pay his expenses here: he will depart and the memories will remain with me; I will be obliged to settle the bills not only for the cook, and the laundress, the hire of coaches etc., etc. but also those of the two doctors who attended to Monsieur's leg, the cobbler who made him white and purple slippers, and the tailor who ran up cloaks, cassocks, and bands, all the complete trimmings for a Cardinal and his priests.*

*If you add to that, Monsieur le Comte, my exceptional expenses for entertaining before, during and after the Conclave, expenses increased by the presence of the Grand-Duchess Helen, Prince Paul of Wurtemberg and the King of Bavaria, you will surely realize that the thirty thousand francs you granted me will be easily exceeded. The first year of an Ambassador's establishment is ruinous, since the assistance accorded that establishment being well below what is needed, it takes a stay of almost three years for a diplomatic agent to find the means to pay the debts he first contracted and balance expenses with income. I know all the budgetary difficulties of the Foreign Office; if I had a fortune of my own, I would not importune you in this way; nothing is more disagreeable to me, I assure you, than these monetary details into which I am forced to enter by dire necessity, despite my wishes.*

*Accept, Monsieur le Comte, etc.'*



## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 7

#### A reception for Grand-Duchess Helen at the Villa Medici

*I had given balls and soirees in London and Paris, and though a child of a different wilderness, I had coped quite well with those new solitudes; but I had no idea of what Roman entertainments could be like: they have something about them of ancient poetry which sets death alongside pleasure. At the Villa Medici where the gardens are already a picture and where I received Grand-Duchess Helen, the frame of that picture is magnificent: on one side the Villa Borghese with Raphael's house; on the other the Villa Monte-Mario and the slopes bordering the Tiber; below the spectator the whole of Rome, like an old abandoned eagle's nest. Among the groves, with the descendants of the Paulas and Cornelias, thronged the beauties of Naples, Florence and Milan; Princess Helen seemed their queen. Boreas, suddenly swooping down from the mountains, tore open the banqueting tent, and fled with shreds of canvas and garlands, as if to provide us with an image of all the years that have swept that shore. The embassy Staff was appalled: I felt a kind of ironic gaiety on seeing a breath from the heavens carry off the day's gilding and the pleasures of the hour. The damage was promptly repaired. Instead of lunching on the terrace, we ate in the elegant palace: the music of horns and oboes, dispersed by the wind, held something of the murmur of my American forests. The groups of guests entertaining themselves in the squalls, the women whose twisted veils beat against their faces and hair, the sartarella (a popular dance theme) which continued during the whirlwind, the improvisator (an extempore performer) who declaimed to the clouds, the balloon bearing the emblem of the Daughter of the North (Russia) flying off obliquely, all gave a fresh character to these entertainments with which my life's customary tempests seemed to mingle.*

How fascinating for anyone who had not yet tallied their count of years, and who still asked the world and the storm for illusions! I find it difficult to think of my autumn, when I see passing before me at my receptions, those women of the spring who vanish among the lights, music and flowers of my line of galleries: like swans floating towards radiant climes. To what diversions are they going? Some seek what they have already loved, others what they do not yet love. At the end of their course they will fall into those sepulchres which are ever open here, those ancient sarcophagi which serve as basins to fountains suspended from porticoes; they will add to all the light and lovely dust. This tide of beauty, diamonds, flowers, and feathers flows by to the sound of Rossini's music which echoes and fades from orchestra to orchestra. Is that melody the sigh of the breeze which I heard among the savannahs of the Floridas, the moaning I listened to in the Temple of Erectheus at Athens? Is it the distant plaint of the northerlies that rocked me on the Ocean? Could my *sylph* be hidden beneath the form of one of those dazzling Italian women? No: my dryad has stayed faithful to the willows in the meadows where I communed with her, beyond the grove at Combours. I am truly a stranger to the frolics of this society which has attached itself to my footsteps at the end of my path; and yet there is a kind of intoxication in this enchantment which goes to my head; I free myself of it only by going to cool my brow in the solitary square of St Peter's or the deserted Coliseum. Then the trivial sights of earth vanish, and I can find nothing to match the sudden change of scene but the ancient melancholy of my youth.

## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 8

#### My relations with Bonaparte's family

I record here my relations as Ambassador with the Bonaparte family, in order to free the restoration from one of the slanders which has been continually aimed at its head.

France did not act alone in the banishment of members of the Imperial family; she merely obeyed the harsh necessity imposed by force of arms; it was the Allies who initiated that banishment: diplomatic agreements and formal treaties declared the Bonapartes' exile, prescribing even the places they should inhabit, forbidding any Minister or Ambassador of the five powers *on their own* to grant a passport to Napoleon's parents; a visa signed by *four* more Ministers or Ambassadors one from each of the other four contracted powers was required. To such a degree did the blood of Napoleon terrify the Allies, even when it was not flowing in his own veins!

God be thanked, I was never put to these measures. In 1823, without consulting anyone, despite the treaties and on my own responsibility as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I granted a passport to Madame la Comtesse de Survilliers, then at Brussels, to allow her to visit Paris to care for one of her relatives who was ill. A score of times I have requested the repeal of these oppressive laws; twenty times I told Louis XVIII that I would like to see the Duke of Reichstadt as Captain of his Guards and the statue of Napoleon replaced on top of the column in the Place Vendôme. As Minister and Ambassador, I rendered every service I could to Bonaparte's family. It is thus that I generously understand legitimate monarchy: freedom can look glory in the face. As Ambassador in Rome, I authorized my secretaries and attachés to visit the palace of Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu, I overthrew the barriers which separated the French who had known like adversity. I wrote to Monsieur le Cardinal Fesch to invite him to join the Cardinals who were to meet at my residence; I gave him witness of my grief at the political measures they had felt it necessary to adopt; I recalled the time when I had been part of his embassy to the Holy See; and I begged my former Ambassador to honor his former Secretary's dinner with his presence. I received this response full of dignity, discretion and foresight:

*'From the Falconieri Palace, 4th of April 1829.*

*Cardinal Fesch is highly appreciative of Monsieur de Chateaubriand's obliging invitation but his situation on his return to Rome advises him to forsake the world, and lead a life free of any society foreign to his family. The circumstances which have followed have shown him that such a course of action is indispensable to his tranquility; and present kindnesses failing to guarantee the absence of disagreements in the future, he is obliged to avoid changing his way of life. Cardinal Fesch asks Monsieur de Chateaubriand to remain convinced that nothing equals his acquaintance, and that it pains him greatly not to visit his Excellency's residence as frequently as he would wish.*

*Your very humble, etc.*

*CARDINAL FESCH.'*

The phrase in this note: *present kindnesses failing to guarantee the absence of disagreements in the future* alluded to Monsieur de Blacas' threats, he having ordered Monsieur le Cardinal Fesch thrown from

top to bottom of the stairs, if he appeared at the French embassy; Monsieur de Blacas forgot that he had not always been a great lord. I, who in order to be, as far as I can, what I should be in the present, ceaselessly recall my past, and acted otherwise regarding Monsieur the Archbishop of Lyons: the petty misunderstandings which once existed between us in Rome obliging me to show all the more respectful attention to him once I was, in turn, of the victorious party and he of the defeated one.

For his part, Prince Jérôme did me the honor of asking my intervention by bringing me a copy of a request which he addressed to the Cardinal Secretary of State; he tells me in his letter:

*‘Exile is as dreadful in principle as in its consequences when that generous France which saw his birth (Prince Jérôme), that France which possesses all his affections, and which he has served for twenty years, seeks to aggravate his situation by permitting each government to abuse the delicacy of his position.*

*Prince Jérôme de Montfort, confident of the French government’s fairness, and in the character of its noble representative, has no hesitation in believing that justice will be rendered him.*

*He takes the opportunity, etc.*

*JÉRÔME.’*

In consequence of this request, I addressed a confidential note to the Secretary of State, at that time Cardinal Bernetti; which ended with these words:

*‘The motives inferred by Prince Jerome de Montfort appearing to the undersigned to be correctly and reasonably founded, he cannot refuse the intervention of his good offices on behalf of the claimant, persuaded that the French government will always be troubled at seeing the rigor of politically motivated law aggravated by petulant measures.*

*The undersigned sets particular weight, in these circumstances, on obtaining the powerful support of His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State.*

*CHATEAUBRIAND.’*

At the same time I replied to Prince Jérôme as follows:

*‘Rome, the 9th of May 1829.*

*The Ambassador of France to the Holy See has received the copy of the note which Prince Jérôme de Montfort has had the honor to send him. He hastens to thank him for the confidence he has shown in him; he considers it his duty to support His Highness’ just requests to His Holiness’ Secretary of State.*

*The Vicomte de Chateaubriand, who has also experienced exile from his country, would be very pleased if he were able to ease the fate of those French people who find themselves still under threat of a politically motivated law. Napoleon’s exiled brother addressing himself to an émigré, who once had his name erased from the list of those proscribed, by Napoleon himself, it is fitting that it is the ruins of Rome which should witness such a quirk of fortune.*

*The Vicomte de Chateaubriand has the honor, etc.'*

In Rome, a daughter of Princess Elisa Bacciochi, of a gloomy appearance, has the habit of walking to the *Pincio* and the *Villa Borghese*; she wears a dagger at her waist and sometimes takes pot-shots with her pistol at her chambermaid. When Madame Bacciochi left Lucca, the crowd followed her with abuse; the Princess putting her head out at the carriage window, addressed the crowd with a threatening gesture of her finger: '*I will be back, rabble.*' Madame Bacciochi has not returned and the rabble remains. The members of a family which produce an extraordinary man are a little odd themselves in imitation: they dress like him, affect his manner of speech, his ways and habits; if he was a soldier they say they will conquer the world; if he was a poet, that they will write *Athalie*. But it is not with great individuals as it is with great lineages; you can transmit your blood but not your genius.

*DISPATCH TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE PORTALIS.*

*'Rome, 4th of May 1829.*

*I had the honor to inform you, in my letter of the 30th of April, in acknowledging reception of your dispatch no. 25, that the Pope granted me a private audience on the 29th of April at mid-day. His Holiness appeared to me to be enjoying very good health. He made me sit down with him and kept me for about an hour and a quarter. The Austrian Ambassador had been given a public audience before me to present his new letters of accreditation.*

*On leaving His Holiness' office in the Vatican, I visited the Secretary of State, and tackling the matter openly with him, said: "Well, you see how our newspapers treat you! You are an Austrian, you detest France, and you want to do her a bad turn: should I believe any of that?"*

*He shrugged his shoulders and replied: "Your papers make me smile; I cannot convince you by words if you are not convinced; but put me to the proof and you will know if I dislike France by seeing whether I fail to do what you ask of me in your King's name!" I think, Monsieur le Comte, that Cardinal Albani is sincere. He is profoundly indifferent to religious matters; he is no priest; he has even thought of doffing the purple and marrying; he has no liking for Jesuits, they weary him with the fuss they make; he is lazy, a gourmet, a great amateur in all sorts of pastimes: the boredom that pastoral letters and requests causes him renders him little favorable to the authors of these letters and requests: this old man of eighty wants to die in peace and contentment.*

*I have the honor, etc.'*

BOOK XXX  
CHAPTER 9  
Pius VII

10th of March 1829.

I often visit Monte Cavallo; the solitude of the gardens amplifies the solitude of the Roman Campagne, on which the view across Rome opens, upstream of the right bank of the Tiber. The gardeners are my friends; pathways lead to the Pantry, a humble dairy, and an aviary or zoo whose inhabitants are poor and peaceable like the Popes these days. Looking down from the heights of the terraces enclosing the Quirinal, you can see a narrow street where women are working at their windows on the different floors: some are embroidering, others carding in the silence of this secluded quarter. The Cardinals' cells used at the last Conclave interest me not at all. When St. Peter's was built, when Raphael's masterpieces were commissioned, when Kings came too to kiss the Pope's slipper, there was something worthy of note in the temporal Papacy. I would willingly visit the lodge of a Gregory VII, or a Sixtus V, as I would seek out the lion's den in Babylon; but dark holes, abandoned by an obscure company of septuagenarians, represent no more to me than the *columbaria* of ancient Rome, empty today of their ashes from which the family of the dead have flown.

So, I pass by these already half-demolished cells swiftly in order to walk through the halls of the Palace: there, all speaks to me of an event which can only be matched by going back to Sciarra Colonna, Nogaret and Boniface VII.

My first and last trip to Rome are involved with memories of Pius VII, whose history I have related when speaking of Madame de Beaumont and Bonaparte. My two trips are two pendants traced on the vault of my monument. My loyalty to the memory of my former friends should give my remaining friends confidence: nothing for me is lost in the grave; all I have known lives within me: according to the Indian doctrine, death, in touching us does not destroy us; it only makes us invisible.

BOOK XXX  
CHAPTER 10  
A dispatch and a letter

*'Rome, the 7th of May 1829.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*I have finally received your dispatch no. 25 via Messieurs Desgranges and Franqueville. This harsh dispatch, drawn up by some clerk badly schooled in foreign affairs, is not what I might have expected given the services I have had the good fortune to render the King during the Conclave, and above all it should have taken account of the person to whom it was addressed. Not one kind word for Monsieur Bellocq, who obtained such precious documents; nothing regarding the request I made on his behalf; useless comments on the nomination of Cardinal Albani, a nomination enacted in Conclave and which no one could foresee or prevent; a nomination regarding which I have not ceased to add my clarifications. In my dispatch no. 34, which has certainly reached you by now, I offer you a very straightforward means of ridding yourself of this Cardinal, if he worries France so greatly, and that means will have been half-executed when you receive this letter: tomorrow I take leave of His Holiness; I am handing over the Embassy to Monsieur Bellocq, as *Chargé d'Affaires*, according to the instructions in your dispatch no 24, and departing for Paris.*

*I have the honor, etc.'*

This last note is severe, and brusquely terminated my correspondence with Monsieur Portalis.

*TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.*

*'14th of May 1829.*

*My departure is fixed for the 16th. Letters from Vienna arrived this morning announcing that Monsieur de Laval has refused the Foreign Ministry; is it true? If he holds to his initial refusal, what will happen? God knows. I hope it will all be decided before I arrive in Paris. It seems to me that we have fallen into paralysis and no longer speak the language of liberty.*

*You believe I would get on well with Monsieur de Laval; I doubt it. I am not disposed to get on well with anyone. I would like to reach a most peaceful accommodation, and these people choose to quarrel with me. While I had a chance of the Ministry, they could not write enough words of praise and flattery in their dispatches; the day the position was taken, or supposedly taken, I am coldly informed of Monsieur de Laval's nomination in the rudest, and at the same time dullest, of dispatches. But in order to become so bland and insolent from one post to another, one can hardly be thinking about whom one is addressing, and Monsieur de Portalis would have been alerted by a word of reply I sent him recently. It is possible that he merely signed it without reading it, as Carnot signed various death warrants on trust.'*

## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 11

#### On Presumption

Chancellor Olivier, the friend of the great Michel de L'Hôpital, in his sixteenth century language, braving honesty, compares the French to monkeys who, clambering to the tops of trees, climb without a pause till they reach the highest branch, and display their backsides when they get there. What happened in France from 1789 till the present proves the rightness of the simile: every man, clambering through life, is like the Chancellor's ape; he ends by exposing his infirmities shamelessly to passers-by. See how in ending my dispatches I am seized with the desire to boast: the great men now swarming about demonstrate that it is stupid not to proclaim one's own immortality.

Have you read, in the archives of the Foreign Ministry, the diplomatic correspondence relating to the most important events at the time of that correspondence? - No.

At least you will have read the published correspondence; you will know about the negotiations carried out by Du Bellay, D'Ossat, Duperron, President Jeannin, the *Memoirs* of Secretary of State de Villeroy, Sully's *Économies royales*; you will have read the *Memoirs* of Cardinal de Richelieu, numerous letters by Mazarin, the items and documents relating to the Treaty of Westphalia and Peace of Munster? You will know Barillon's dispatches regarding affairs in England; the negotiations over the Spanish Succession will be no stranger to you; the name of Madame des Ursins will not have escaped you; Monsieur de Choiseul's *Family Compact* will have met your eyes; you will not be ignorant of Ximénès, Olivarès, and Pombal, Hugo Grotius on the freedom of the oceans, his letters to the two Oxenstierns, the negotiations of the Grand-Pensionary Johan de Witt with Pierre Grotius, Hugo's second son; the whole collection of diplomatic treaties will have attracted your gaze perhaps?

- No.

So, you have not read these everlasting rants? Well! Read them; when you have done, pass on to my war in Spain whose success solicits your attention, even though it was my first claim to be classed as a Statesman; pick up my dispatches from Prussia, England and Rome; set them alongside these other dispatches I have mentioned: hand on heart, tell me then which of them bored you most; tell me if my work and that of my predecessors is not all of a piece; if the understanding of trivial things and *practicalities* is not as manifest on my side as on that of past Ministers and dead Ambassadors?

First you will note that I kept an eye on everything; that I concern myself with Reschid Pasha and Monsieur de Blacas; that I defend my privileges and rights as Ambassador to Rome against all-comers; that I am cunning, devious (an eminent characteristic!), subtle, in that Monsieur de Funchal, in an equivocal position, having written to me, I fail to reply; but out of astute politeness I go to see him, so that he cannot show a line of my handwriting and nevertheless is satisfied. Not an imprudent word to retract in my conversations with Cardinals Bernetti and Albani, the two Secretaries of State; nothing escapes me; I grapple with the tiniest details; I achieve compatibility between the affairs of France and Rome, in such a manner that it still endures on the basis I established. With an eagle eye, I perceive that the Treaty of Trinità dei Monti between the Holy See and Ambassadors Laval and Blacas, oversteps the mark, and that one of the two parties had no right to enter into it. From there, mounting higher and arriving at grand diplomacy, I take it upon myself to entrust a Cardinal with the power of veto, because a Minister of

Foreign Affairs left me without instructions and exposed me to the threat of seeing a creature of Austria elected Pope. I procure the secret minutes of the Conclave; something no other Ambassador has been able to obtain; I send day by day the list of candidates nominated. I fail to neglect Bonaparte's family; I do not despair of bringing about, by kind attentions, Cardinal Fesch's handing in his resignation as Archbishop of Lyons. If a carbonaro stirs, I know it, and I judge the greater or lesser likelihood of a conspiracy; if a priest intrigues, I know it, and I foil the plots which have been formed for divorcing the Cardinals from the French Ambassador. Finally I discover that an important secret has been entrusted by Cardinal Latil to the breast of the Grand Confessor. Are you satisfied? Is this not a man who knows his trade? Well, I handled this diplomatic job like the first Ambassador to pass by, without it costing me a thought, as a dull peasant in Lower Normandy knits stockings while guarding his sheep: my sheep were my dreams!

Here is another point of view: if you compare my official letters to those of my predecessors, you will see that in mine public affairs are treated like private affairs; that I was carried along by the nature of the ideas of my age to a higher region of the human mind. That can be seen above all in the dispatch in which I speak to Monsieur Portalis about the state of Italy, where I show the error governments are making in treating as conspiracies things which are due to the development of civilization. My *Memoir* on the war in the East also reveals the realities of a political order which emerges from a common impulse. I spoke with two Popes about other things than government intrigue; I obliged them to discuss religion, liberty, the future fate of the world. My speech delivered at the gate of the Conclave had the same character. I dared to speak to those old men of progress, of setting religion at the forefront of society's advance.

Be patient, Reader, while I finish my boasting, in arriving at my goal, in the style of Plato taking a ramble around his subject. I am like old Sidrac, age lengthens my road. I resume: I shall be a while yet. Several writers today have a mania for spurning their literary talents in order to pursue their political talents, ranking them far above the former. Thank God, a contrary instinct dominates me; I consider politics of little account for the same reasons that have allowed me to enjoy that game of chance. To be a superior man of affairs, it is not a matter of acquiring qualities it is simply a question of forgetting them. I recognize without shame in myself an aptitude for practical matters, without any illusions as to the barrier within me to ultimate success. That barrier does not come from *the Muse*; it is born of my indifference to everything. With that flaw, it is impossible to achieve anything in the practical life.

Indifference, I admit, is a quality of Statesmen, but Statesmen without conscience. One must know how to view every event with a cool gaze, swallow snakes as if they were sweet wine, setting at naught, in respect of others, morality, justice, suffering, so long as in the midst of revolution one knows how to secure a private fortune. For to these transcendent spirits, chance, whether good or evil, is forced to yield something; it must finance them at the cost of a throne, a coffin, a vow, an insult; the tariff is set by some Mionnet of disasters and affronts; I am no connoisseur in such numismatics. Unfortunately my nonchalance is a dual one; I am no more concerned about myself than about events. Contempt for the world derived in St. Paul the Hermit from his religious faith; disdain for society derives in me from my political skepticism. That skepticism would take me far in the sphere of action if, being more sensible of my personal folly, I knew at the same time how to disguise it and humble it. I have done well, I remain a simple and honest man, naively astonished and quite naked, knowing neither how to crawl nor snatch.



D'Andilly, speaking of himself, seems to have depicted one aspect of my character: *'I have never possessed any ambition'*, he says, *'because I have too much, being unable to endure a subservience which confines within such narrow limits the effects of that inclination God has given me for great things, things glorious to the State and those which might procure the happiness of nations, and finding it impossible to envisage my personal interests in it all. I was only fit to be a King who would reign alone and who would have no other desire but to make his glory immortal.'* In that respect, I was not suited to the Kings of the day.

Now that I have led you by the hand through the most private by-ways of my virtues and you have become acquainted with all that is rare in my dispatches, like one of my colleagues in the Institute who sings his own praises incessantly and teaches men how to admire him, now I will tell you where I am going with all this vanity: by showing what they can achieve in a post, I want to defend men of letters against the diplomats, accountants and bureaucrats.

There is no cause for the latter to suddenly think themselves above men of whom the least surpasses them by a head; when one knows so many things, like those practical gentlemen, one should at least not spout inanities. You speak of *facts*, well recognize the *facts*: most of the great writers of antiquity, of the Middle Ages, of present-day England, have been great Statesmen, when they have deigned to descend to public affairs. *'I would not like them to know,'* says Alfieri, refusing an Embassy, *'that their diplomacy and their dispatches seemed to me, and were certainly for me, less important than my tragedies or even those of others; but it is impossible to reclaim those kind of people: they cannot and should not be converted.'*

Who was more literary in French history than L'Hôpital, the heir of Horace, than D'Ossat, that skillful Ambassador, than Richelieu, that strong mind, who, not content with dictating *controversial treatises*, with creating *memoirs* and *histories*, invented endless dramatic subjects, made rhymes with Malleville and Boisrobert, and by the sweat of his brow engendered the *Academy* and the *Grande Pastorale*? Was it because he was a poor writer that he was a great Minister? But the question is not one of more or less talent; it is one of having a passion for paper and ink: now Monsieur de l'Emyrée never showed more ardor, never spent more than the Cardinal to win the palm of Parnassus, whose production of his tragicomedy *Mirame* cost him two hundred thousand crowns! If in a person, at once political and literary, poetic mediocrity created the Statesman's superiority, one should conclude that the Statesman's weaknesses resulted from poetic strengths: yet did literary genius destroy Solon's political genius, an elegist equal to Simonides; or that of Pericles stealing from *the Muses* the eloquence with which he controlled Athens; or that of Thucydides or Demosthenes who elevated the glories of the writer and orator so highly, while dedicating their lives to war and the public forum? Did it destroy the genius of Xenophon who orchestrated the retreat of the Ten Thousand, while dreaming of the *Cyropedia*; of the two Scipios, the one the friend of Laelius, the other associated with Terence's fame; of Cicero, king of letters as he was father of his country; and finally Caesar, the rival of Archilochus in satire, of Sophocles in tragedy, of Demosthenes in eloquence, and whose *Commentaries* are the despair of historians?

Notwithstanding these examples and a thousand others, literary talent, quite evidently the supreme talent of all because it does not exclude any other ability, will always be an obstacle to political success in this country: what indeed is the use of a superior intellect? It is no use for anything at all. French fools, a species peculiar to our nation, have no Frenchman to match Grotius, Frederick, Bacon, Thomas More, Spencer, Falkland, Clarendon, Bolingbroke, Burke, or Canning.

Our vanity will never accept two aptitudes in a single individual, even a genius, or the ability to do as well as a common mind faced with common things. If you overstep the bounds of vulgar thought, a thousand imbeciles shout: '*You're lost in the clouds!*' delighted that they feel able to live in the depths, where their thought resides. Those envious wretches, because of their inner poverty, refuse to countenance merit; they send Virgil, Racine and Lamartine back to their versifying. But, proud Sirs, where should you be sent? To oblivion: it waits for you at twenty paces from your door, while twenty lines written by those poets will endure to the last generation.

BOOK XXX  
CHAPTER 12  
The French in Rome

The first invasion of Rome by the French, under the Directory, was vile and destructive; the second, under the Empire, was iniquitous; but once accomplished, order reigned.

The Republic demanded of Rome, as a peace-offering, twenty-two millions, the occupation of the citadel of Ancona, a hundred paintings and statues, and a hundred manuscripts selected by the French Commissioners. Above all they wanted the busts of Brutus and Marcus Aurelius: so many men were named *Brutus* in France at that time! It was simply that they wanted to possess the sacred image of their putative ancestor; but Marcus Aurelius, whose relative was he? Attila, only asked quantities of gunpowder and silk, for sparing Rome: in our age, it was an event purchased with paintings. Great artists, often neglected and unfortunate, left their masterpieces to serve as ransom for ungrateful cities they never knew.

The French of the Empire were forced to repair the ravages in Rome caused by the French of the Republic; they also had to make expiation for that former sack of Rome accomplished by an army led by a French Prince; it was fitting that a Bonaparte should set in order the ruins that another Bonaparte had seen multiply, and the overthrow of which he had described. The plan, which the French administration followed, for the clearing of the Forum was that which Raphael proposed to Leo X: three columns of the Temple of Jupiter the Thunderer emerged from the earth; the portico of the Temple of Concord was revealed; the pavement of the Via Sacra was uncovered; the new buildings with which the Temple of Peace was cluttered were removed; the earth that covered the terraces of the Coliseum was dug out, the interior of the arena cleared, and seven or eight rooms in the Baths of Titus repaired.

Elsewhere the Forum of Trajan was excavated; the Pantheon, the Baths of Diocletian and the Temple of Patrician Chastity. Funds were allocated to maintain, outside Rome, the walls of Falerij and the tomb of Cecilia Metella.

The work of maintaining the modern buildings was equally pursued: St. Paul's Outside the Walls, which has been destroyed, saw its roof restored; St. Agnes Outside the Walls, and St. Martin's In the Hills, were protected from the weather. Sections of the paving and vaulting of St. Peter's were repaired; lightning conductors were put in place to protect Michelangelo's dome from storms. The sites of two cemeteries on the east and west of the City were marked out, and one on the east near the monastery of San Lorenzo was closed.

The Quirinal clothed its internal bareness in a wealth of porphyry and Roman marble: designating it an Imperial palace, Bonaparte, before taking up residence, wished to remove all traces of the Pontiff's abduction, he having been imprisoned at Fontainebleau. It was proposed that an area of the City between the Capitol and Monte Cavallo, should be razed in order that the conqueror could ascend an immense avenue to arrive at his Imperial residence: events obliterated these vast dreams by destroying massive realities.

Among the abandoned projects was one of constructing a series of quays from Ripetta to Ripa Grande; these quays would have been planted out; the four islets with houses on between Castel Sant'Angelo and

the Piazza Rusticucci were acquired in part and have been razed. A large avenue was thus opened onto St. Peter's Square which could then be seen from the foot of Castel Sant'Angelo.

The French were always out walking; In Cairo I saw a large square which they had planted with palm trees, and surrounded with cafes that bore Parisian names: in Rome, my compatriots have created the Pincio; one climbs it by a slope. Descending the slope, the other day, I saw a carriage go by in which there was a woman still quite young: with her blonde hair, the solidity of her waist, and her inelegant appearance, I took her for a pale fat foreigner from Westphalia; it was Madame Guiccioli: no one is less suitable as Byron's memorial. What does it matter? The daughter of Ravenna (whom the poet had wearied of by the time he joined the dead) will none the less pass, led by the Muse, to take her place in the Elysian Fields and add one more to the divinities beyond the tomb.

The eastern section of the Piazza del Popolo should have been planted out in the area occupied by building-sites and shops; one might have seen, from the extremity of the square, the Capitol, the Vatican and St. Peter's beyond the quays along the Tiber, that is to say ancient Rome and simultaneously modern Rome.

Finally, a wood, created by the French, now rises to the east of the Coliseum; one meets no one there: though it has grown, it looks like undergrowth scattered at the foot of a tall ruin.

Pliny the Younger wrote to Maximus:

*'They are sending you to Greece, where hospitality, literature, even agriculture, had their origin. Respect the gods their founders, and the presence of those gods; respect the ancient glory of that nation, and respect old age, sacred in the townships as it is venerable in men; honor their antiquity, their famous exploits, even their myths. Undertake nothing in opposition to anyone's dignity, liberty or even vanity. Keep continually before your eyes the fact that we have derived our legal system from that country; that we have not imposed laws on that people after conquering them, but that they have given us their own after we sought to know them. You are to command in Athens, and Sparta; it would show inhumanity, cruelty, barbarism to rob them of the name and shadow of freedom which remains to them.'*

When Pliny wrote those noble and moving words to Maximus, did he realize he might be writing instructions for nations who were still barbarous, but would one day come to rule the ruins of Rome?

## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 13

#### Walks

I will soon be leaving Rome, but I hope to return. I love with a fresh passion this Rome so beautiful and so sad; I shall own a view from the Capitol where the Prussian Minister will let me have the little Caffarelli Palace; at Sant' Onofrio I have arranged another retreat. Pending my departure and my return, I wander endlessly in the Campagna; there is not a single little track, between two hedges, that I do not know better than the lanes of Combourg. From the heights of the Monte Mario and the surrounding hills, I can see the horizon over the sea towards Ostia; I rest beneath the graceful crumbling porticoes of the Villa Madama. In these fragments of architecture, converted to farms, I often find only a shy young girl, timid and agile as her goats. When I go out by the *Porta Pia*, I walk to the *Ponte Lamentano* over the Tevere; I admire, as I pass St Agnes', a head of Christ by Michelangelo which keeps watch over the almost deserted convent. The masterpieces of the great artists scattered in this way across the wilderness fill my soul with profound melancholy. I am sorry they have hung the paintings of Rome in a museum; I would have taken more pleasure in following the slopes of the Janiculum, beneath the aqueduct of Acqua Paola, across the solitary *Via delle Fornaci*, to seek the Transfiguration in the Recollect Monastery of *San Pietro in Montorio*. When one looks at the place above the high altar of the church, once occupied by Raphael's funeral ornament, one's heart is distressed and saddened.

Beyond the Ponte Lamentano, yellow pastures extend to the Tiber on the left; the river which washed Horace's gardens flows here unknown. Following the highroad you come to the paving stones of the ancient Via Tiburtina. There I saw the first swallow arrive this year.

I go botanizing by the tomb of Cecilia Metella: the wavy mignonette and the Apennine anemone make a fine effect against the paleness of the ruins and the soil. Taking the Ostia road I go to St. Paul's, which has lately fallen victim to fire; I sit on some calcined porphyry, and watch the workmen silently building a new church; someone pointed out a half-finished column as I descended the Simplon: the whole history of Christianity in the West began with *St Paul's Outside the Walls*.

In France, when we erect some little shack, we make a horrendous din; with scores of machines, and a deal of men and shouting; in Italy, they undertake immense projects almost without a murmur. The Pope is having the fallen sections of the Coliseum rebuilt at this very moment; half a dozen workmen are erecting, without any scaffolding, the colossus on whose shoulders a nation of slave laborers died. Near Verona, I often used to stop to watch a village priest who was building a huge bell-tower by himself; under him his farmer acted as mason.

I often make a tour of the walls of Rome on foot; following this circular route, I read the history of this queen of the pagan and Christian worlds in the construction, architecture, and varied age of these walls.

I also go looking for some deserted villa within the walls of Rome. I visit Santa Maria Maggiore, St. John Lateran with its obelisk, Santa Croce di Gerusalemme with its flowers; there I listen to the singing; I pray; I like to pray on my knees; my heart thus is nearer to the dust and eternal rest: I draw closer to the grave.

My excavations are only a variation on the same pleasures. From the plateau of some hill one can see the Dome of St Peter's. What does one pay the proprietor of the place where treasures lie buried: the price of

the grass destroyed by the dig? Perhaps I shall give my clay to the earth in exchange for the statue it will yield me; we shall only be bartering one image of man for another.

He who has not walked the streets of its suburbs has not seen Rome, streets interspersed with empty spaces, gardens full of ruins, enclosures planted with trees and vines, and cloisters where palms and cypresses stand, the former like Eastern women, the latter like nuns in mourning. Emerging from these ruins one sees tall Roman women, poor but beautiful, on their way to buy fruit or fetch water from the cascades flowing from the aqueducts built by Emperors and Popes. To see their way of life in all its simplicity, I pretend to be searching for an apartment to rent; I knock at the door of a secluded house; someone calls out: *Favorisca* (*Enter*). I go in: I find in a bare room a workman pursuing his trade, or a proud *zitella*, knitting with a cat on her lap, who watches me wander about without leaving her seat.

When the weather is poor, I retire to St. Peter's or else lose myself in the Vatican Museum, with its eleven thousand rooms and eighteen thousand windows (*Justus Lipsius*). What acres of masterpieces! You reach them by way of a gallery the walls of which are encrusted with epitaphs and ancient inscriptions: Death seems to have been born in Rome.

There are more tombs than dead in this city. I imagine that the deceased, when they feel too warm in their marble resting place, slip into another still empty one, as a sick man is moved from one bed to another. At night one can almost hear the skeletons moving from coffin to coffin.

It was the end of June when I first saw Rome; the hot season increases the number of people deserting the city; foreigners flee, the natives stay indoors; during the day the streets are empty. The sun beats down on the Coliseum where the weeds hang motionless, and only the lizards stir. The ground is bare; the cloudless sky seems emptier than the earth. But soon night brings the inhabitants out of their palaces, and the stars out in the firmament; earth and sky are re-populated; Rome revives; this life begun again in silence in the shadows, round the tombs, is like the life and movement of shades that descend again to Erebus at the approach of day.

Yesterday evening I wandered in the moonlit Campagna, between the Porta Angelica and the Monte Mario. A nightingale was singing in a narrow valley fenced in by canes. Only then did I rediscover that melodious sadness the ancient poets speak of with regard to this bird of spring. The long whistle which everyone knows, and which precedes the winged musician's brilliant flourishes, was not piercing like that of our nightingales; it was a somewhat muffled sound like the whistle of the bullfinch in our woodlands. All its notes were a semitone lower; its ballad and refrain were transposed from the major to the minor; it sang softly; as if it wished to enchant the sleep of the dead and not wake them. From this untilled land, *Horace's Lydia*, *Tibullus' Delia*, and *Ovid's Corinna* had passed; only *Virgil's Philomela* remained. Its hymn of love had a powerful effect in that place at that hour; it gave me who knows what yearning for a second life: according to *Socrates*, love is the desire to be born again through the agency of beauty; it was this desire which a young Greek girl inspired in a young man when she said to him: '*If I had nothing left but the thread of my pearl necklace, I would share it with you.*'

If I have the good fortune to end my days here, I have organized a retreat at Sant' Onofrio adjoining the room where *Tasso* died. In the moments of leisure my embassy leaves me, I will continue my *Memoirs* beside the window of my cell. In one of the loveliest places on earth, among the orange trees and the

ilexes, with all Rome under my eyes, each morning, as I sit down to work, between the poet's deathbed and his tomb, I will invoke the spirit of glory and misfortune.

## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 14

My nephew, Christian de Chateaubriand

A few days after my arrival in Rome, while I was wandering aimlessly in this way, I encountered a group of schoolboys between the Baths of Titus and the Coliseum. A master in a slouch hat, and torn and trailing gown, who looked like a poor member of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, was leading them. Passing by, I looked at him, and thought he looked vaguely like my nephew Christian de Chateaubriand, but I dared not believe my eyes. He, in turn, looked at me, and without showing the least surprise said: 'Uncle!' I rushed towards him, deeply moved, and clasped him in my arms. With a wave of his hand he halted his silent and obedient flock behind him. Christian was at once pale and brown, sapped by fever and burnt by the sun. He told me he was Prefect of Studies at the Jesuit College, which was then on holiday at Tivoli. He had almost forgotten his native tongue, and expressed himself with difficulty in French, since he spoke and taught only in Italian. I gazed, eyes full of tears, at my brother's son turned foreigner, a schoolmaster in Rome, dressed in a dusty black surcoat, and covering that noble brow the helmet so became with a cenobite's hat.

I had seen Christian's birth; a few days before emigrating I attended his baptism. His father, his grandfather, President de Rosanbo, and his great-grandfather, Monsieur de Malesherbes were present. The latter stood sponsor to him and gave him his own name, *Christian*. The church of Saint-Laurent was empty and already half-destroyed. The nurse and I took the child from the priest's hands.

*'Io piangendo ti presi, et in breve cesta  
Fuor ti portai.*

*Weeping, I took you, and in a little basket  
Carried you away.'* (Tasso)

The newborn child was taken back to its mother, and laid on her bed where she and its grandmother, Madame de Rosanbo, greeted it with tears of joy. Two years later, the father, grandfather, great-grandfather, mother and grandmother had perished on the scaffold, and I, witness to the baptism, was wandering in exile. Such were the recollections that my nephew's sudden appearance brought to mind anew amongst the ruins of Rome. Christian has already spent half his life as an orphan; he has dedicated the remaining half to the altar: the ever-welcoming threshold of the common Father of mankind.

Christian had an ardent and jealous affection for his worthy brother, Louis; after Louis married, Christian left for Italy; there he met the Duc de Rohan-Chabot and encountered Madame Récamier; like his uncle, he has returned to live in Rome, he in a cloister, I in a palace. He entered the religious life to restore a fortune to his brother which he did not consider himself entitled to under the new laws: so Malesherbes and Combours now both belong to Louis.

After our unexpected meeting at the foot of the Coliseum, Christian came to see me at the Embassy, accompanied by a Jesuit brother; his bearing was sad and his expression serious; in the old days he was always laughing. I asked him if he was happy; he replied: '*I suffered for a long time; now the sacrifice is made and I am content.*'



Christian has inherited the iron character of my father, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, who was his paternal grandfather, and the moral qualities of his maternal great-grandfather, Monsieur de Malesherbes. His feelings are reticent, though he displays them, without regard to the prejudices of the mob, where his duties are concerned: a guard in the Dragoons, descending from his horse he would go straight to Communion; no one laughed at him, since his bravery and kindness were the admiration of his comrades. After he left the service, it was found that he had secretly helped a considerable number of soldiers and officers; he still supports some pensioners in the garrets of Paris, and Louis discharges these, his brother's, debts. One day, in France, I asked Christian if he would marry: *'If I married,'* he replied, *'I would wed one of my little cousins, the poorest of them all.'*

Christian spends his nights in prayer; he practices mortifications which worry his superiors: a sore that appeared on one of his legs was the result of his insistence on kneeling for hours on end; never did innocence repent so fervently.

Christian is not a man of this century: he reminds me of those dukes and counts of Charlemagne's court who, after fighting the Saracens, founded monasteries in lonely places, such as Gellone or Malavalle, and became monks there. I regard him as a saint and would willingly invoke his name. I am convinced that his good works, added to those of my mother and my sister Julie, will obtain grace for me before the sovereign Judge. I have a leaning towards the cloister too; but if my hour were to come, I would ask for a lonely cell by the Portioncula, under the protection of my patron saint, called Francis because he spoke French.

I will trail about in my sandals alone; not for anything in the world would I tolerate a companion in my retreat.

*'In his youth,'* says Dante, *'he rushed to oppose his father, for such a Lady, to whom, like Death, no one opens the gate of his pleasure... She, deprived of her first husband for eleven hundred years and more, was obscure, despised...She mounted the Cross with Christ...But lest I proceed too darkly, accept, in plain speech, that FRANCIS AND POVERTY were these two lovers; Francesco e Povertà.'* (*Paradiso*, Canto XI.)

## BOOK XXX

### CHAPTER 15

A letter to Madame Récamier

*‘Rome, 16th of May 1829.*

*This letter will leave Rome some hours after me, and will arrive in Paris some hours before me. It will complete this correspondence which has never missed a single courier, and which has left a whole volume in your hands. I am experiencing a combination of joy and sorrow that I cannot explain; for three or four months I have been quite miserable in Rome; now I am seized again by these noble ruins, this solitude, so profound, peaceful and yet full of interest and memories. Perhaps the unhopd-for success I obtained here has wedded me to it: I arrived to find every obstacle erected against me, and I overcame them all; they seem to regret my leaving. What shall I find in France? Noise instead of silence, anxiety instead of repose, nonsense, ambition, struggles for position, and vanity. The political approach I adopted was one that no one wished me to, perhaps, and moreover one that they would not have expected me to execute. Yet I tasked myself with bringing France great glory, as I contributed to her obtaining a great freedom; but did they give me a free hand? Did they say: “Take charge, handle everything on your own responsibility?” No; so far from wishing to say any such thing to me, they would have taken anybody in preference to me, they would only admit to me afterwards that they had obtained refusals from all the mediocrities in France, and thought they were doing me a great favor by relegating me to this obscure corner. I am coming to meet you; ambassador or not, it is Rome where I would wish to die. In exchange for a few years of life, I would at least have a fine sepulchre until the day when I went to fill my tomb among the sands which saw my birth. Adieu; I have already travelled several miles towards you.’*

**End of Book XXX**

## BOOK XXXI

### CHAPTER 1

Return to Paris from Rome – My plans – The King and his arrangements – Monsieur Portalis – Monsieur de Martignac – Departure for Rome – The Pyrenees – Adventure

*Paris, August and September 1830, Rue d'Enfer*

I took great pleasure in seeing my friends once more; I dreamt only of the pleasure of carrying them off with me, and ending my days in Rome. I had written to reassure myself regarding the little Caffarelli Palace on the Capitoline which I hoped to rent, and the cell which I had applied for at Sant' Onofrio. I bought English horses and sent them off to the prairies of Evander. I had already said my farewells to my homeland, in my thoughts, with a joy that deserved to be punished. When one has voyaged in one's youth and spent many years away from one's country, one is accustomed to seeing one's grave everywhere: traversing the seas of Greece, it seemed to me that the monuments on all the promontories I saw were hostelries where a bed was awaiting me.

I went to pay my court to the King at Saint-Cloud: he asked me when I was returning to Rome. He was convinced that I had a kind heart but poor judgement. The fact is that I am precisely the opposite of what Charles X thought me: I have a very cool and sound mind, but a questionable heart as far as nine-tenths of mankind are concerned.

I found the King in a very bad mood with regard to his Ministry: he allowed it to be attacked by certain royalist journalists, or rather, when the editors of their papers went to ask him if he found them overly hostile, he said: '*No, no, carry on.*' When Monsieur de Martignac had spoken: '*Well,*' said Charles X, '*have you listened to our Pasta.*' Monsieur Hyde de Neuville's liberal opinions were antipathetic to him; he found a greater readiness to oblige in Monsieur Portalis, the Federalist, who revealed his greed in his face: it is to Monsieur Portalis that France owes its misfortunes. When I saw him at Passy, I was aware of what I had partly guessed: the *Keeper of the Seals*, while claiming to hold the Foreign Ministry only *for the interim*, was dying to retain it, even though he had been granted the position of President of the Court of Cassation. When it came to the question of the King disposing of the Foreign Ministry, he stated: '*I do not say Chateaubriand will not be my Minister; I only say not yet.*' The Prince de Laval had refused it; Monsieur de La Ferronnays could no longer turn in a consistent performance. In the hope that weary of conflict the portfolio would remain with him, Monsieur Portalis did nothing to help the King decide.

Filled with thoughts of the delights of Rome still to come, I allowed myself to drift, without sounding out the future; it suited me for Monsieur Portalis to look after the *interim* under cover of which my political situation remained unchanged. I never considered for a moment that Monsieur de Polignac might be invested with power: his narrow opinions, ardent and fixed, his unpopular and fateful name, his obstinacy, his religious opinions exalted almost to fanaticism, seemed to me reasons for continuing to neglect him. He had, it is true, suffered on behalf of the King; but he had been largely recompensed by his master's friendship and the important London Embassy which I had granted him during my Ministry, despite Monsieur de Villèle's opposition.

Not one of the Ministers I found in place in Paris, with the exception of Monsieur Hyde de Neuville, pleased me: I felt a lack of ability in them which caused me anxiety while they remained in power. Monsieur de Martignac, with a pleasing talent for speech, had a soft and gentle voice like that of a man to

whom the women have lent something of their seductiveness and frailty! Pythagoras remembered having been a delightful courtesan named Alcea. Abbé Sieyès' former Secretary to the Embassy also possessed a restrained arrogance, a cool mind with a trace of envy. In 1823, I had sent him to Spain in a significant and independent capacity, but he wanted to be Ambassador. He was upset at not receiving a post which he believed was worthy of him.

My likes and dislikes were of little consequence. The Chamber committed an error in toppling a government it should have preserved at all costs. That moderate ministry served as a rail above the abyss; it was easy to overthrow it, since it stood for nothing and the King was inimical towards it; all the more reason for not picking a quarrel with those men, and for granting them a majority with the aid of which they might have survived and given way one day, barring accident, to a stronger government. In France, they know nothing about patience; they have a horror of everything that has the semblance of power, until they possess it. Moreover, Monsieur de Martignac has nobly refuted accusations of weakness by spending the rest of his life courageously defending Monsieur de Polignac. My feet itched in Paris; I could not get used to the grey and melancholy skies of France, my *fatherland*; what then would I have thought of the skies of Brittany, my *motherland*, as the Greeks have it? But there, at least, there are sea breezes and calms: *Tumidis albens fluctibus* or *venti posuere*: *whitening with swelling waves* or *the winds dying down*. I gave orders to have changes and additions made to my house and garden in the Rue d'Enfer, necessary in order that at my death a finer house could be left, as a legacy, to Madame de Chateaubriand's Infirmary. I intended the property as a retreat for artists and men of letters who were suffering from illness. I gazed at the pale sun and said to it: *'I will go soon, and find your brighter face once more, and we will not part again.'*

Having taken leave of the King, and hoping to rid him forever of my presence, I entered a calash and went first to the Pyrenees to take the waters at Cauterets; from there, crossing Languedoc and Provence, I would reach Nice and rejoin Madame de Chateaubriand. We passed along the Corniche together, and arrived at the Eternal City which we traversed without stopping, and after two months at Naples, Tasso's cradle, we returned to his tomb in Rome. That is the only moment of my life in which I have been completely happy, of which I asked nothing more, in which my existence was complete, from which I saw only a line of peaceful days extending to my last hour. I was reaching harbor; I was entering it under full sail like Palinurus: *inopia quies: suddenly drowsy*.

My whole journey to the Pyrenees was a series of dreams: I stopped when I wished; my route followed the chronicles of the Middle Ages which it evoked everywhere; in Berry I saw those little hedged lanes which the author of Valentine likens to the *trains* of dresses, and which recalled Brittany. Richard the Lionheart was slain at Chalus, at the foot of the tower: *'Peace there, Muslim child! Richard the King is here!'* At Limoges, I doffed my hat, in respect, to Molière; at Périgieux, the partridges in their earthenware tombs no longer uttered varying cries as in Aristotle's day. I met my old friend Clausel de Cousserges there; he brought with him some written reminiscences of my life. At Bergerac, I might have gazed at Cyrano's nose without being obliged to fight that Guards Cadet: I left him in his own dust with *those gods whom man created, who did not create man*.

At Auch, I admired the choir-stalls carved according to designs made in Rome, in the great era of artistic achievement. D'Ossat, a predecessor of mine at the Court of St. Peter, was born near Auch. The sun already resembled the suns of Italy. At Tarbes, I would have liked to lodge at the *Star* where Froissart

stayed with Messire Espaing de Lyon, ‘a valiant man, a fine and knowledgeable knight’, and where he found ‘excellent hay, good oats, and a lovely river.’

When the Pyrenees appeared on the horizon, my heart quickened: from the depths of twenty-three years emerged memories embellished by those reaches of time: when, on the far side of the range, I discovered the summit of these same mountains, I recalled Palestine and Spain. I am of Madame de Motteville’s opinion; I think that Urgande la Déconnue lived in one of those castles in the Pyrenees. The past is like a museum of antiquities; one tours the vanished hours; everyone finds their own there. One day, walking in a deserted church, I heard footsteps crossing the paving stones, like those of an old man seeking his tomb. I looked around and saw no one; it was I who had been revealed to my own self.

The happier I was in Cauterets, the more the melancholy of what was past charmed me. The narrow, constrained valley is enlivened by a mountain stream; beyond the town and its mineral springs, it divides into two defiles of which one, famous for its beauty spots, ends in glaciers and the bridge into Spain. I took plenty of baths; I completed long walks alone, imagining myself on the heights of the Sabine Hills. I made every effort to be sad and failed. I composed verses about the Pyrenees; I wrote:

*I’ve seen the waters flee from Athens and Jerusalem,  
Seen the shifting sands of Nile and of Ascalon,  
Carthage abandoned, with its harbor whitening:  
While the gentle breeze of evening filled my sail,  
                    and Venus’ starlight pale  
Moist pearl with sunset’s purest gold was mingling.*

*Seated by the mast of my vessel built for speed,  
My eyes sought from afar the Pillars of Hercules,  
Where two angry Neptune’s brandish their tridents.  
Reaching the edge of Hesperia’s ancient shores  
                    Mystery opened wide the doors  
Of palaces, of the noble Abencerage, enchanted.*

*Like a fledgling bee that within the rose has toiled,  
My Muse returned again, with her wealth of spoils,  
Gathering the finest memories from the flower:  
In mountains that Roland cleft by his brilliance  
                    I set down to his lance  
All my proud adventures, undergone for pleasure.*

*Let us flee those shores, when misfortunes attack,  
Of an age abandoned, shores marked with our track,  
That make us say of time, in measuring out our ways:  
“I had a brother once, a mother, and a friend;  
                    Delights that had to end!  
How many of my blood remain to me, how many days?”’*

I found it impossible to finish my ode: I had draped my drum with melancholy to beat the recall of the dreams of my vanished nights; but always among my memories were mingled present thoughts whose happy mien defeated the dismal air of their old colleagues.

While poetizing I saw a young girl sitting on the bank of a mountain stream; she rose and came straight towards me: she knew, by a rumor at large in the hamlet, that I was in Cauterets. I found that the unknown girl was an Occitanian, who had written to me two years previously without my ever having met her; the mysterious unknown unveiled for me: *patuit Dea: the Goddess revealed herself*.

I went to pay a respectful visit to the naiad of the torrent. One evening when she was with me as I was about to retire, she wished to follow; I was obliged to carry her back home in my arms. I have never felt so ashamed; to inspire such an attachment at my age seemed to me truly derisory; the more I might have been flattered by this absurdity, the more I was humiliated, treating it rationally as a joke. I would willingly have hidden myself out of shame, among the bears, our neighbors. I was far from saying what Montaigne said of himself: ‘*Love restores to me my alertness, my moderation, my grace, and my care for my appearance...*’ My poor Michel, you say the most delightful things, but at our age, you know, love does not restore to us what you suggest here. We have only one concern; that is to set ourselves on one side. Instead then of applying myself to *sane and wise studies* by means of which *I may render myself more loveable*, I have allowed the fugitive impression of my Clémence Isaure to fade; the mountain breeze soon carried away the flowery caprice; the witty, resolute and delightful stranger of sixteen was grateful for having been dealt with fairly; she is married.

## BOOK XXXI

### CHAPTER 2

#### Polignac's Ministry – My dismay – I return to Paris

Rumors of ministerial changes had reached our pine-woods. Well-informed people went so far as to speak of the Prince de Polignac; but I was completely incredulous. Finally, the newspapers arrived: I opened them and my eyes fell on the official decree which confirmed the previous rumors. I had experienced a good many changes of fortune since I had entered the world, but I had never received so great a shock. My destiny had once more put paid to my dreams; this breath of fate not only extinguished my illusions, it swept away the monarchy. This blow made me dreadfully ill; I felt momentary despair, since my mind was instantly made up, I felt I must resign. The post brought a shoal of letters; all urged me to send in my resignation. Even people I barely knew thought themselves obliged to suggest my retirement.

I was shocked by this officious interest in my reputation. Thank heaven, I have never needed advice concerning matters of honor; my life has been a series of sacrifices which have never been dictated by anyone else; regarding questions of duty I act spontaneously. A fall from office spells ruin for me, since I own nothing but debts, debts which I contract in places where I do not live long enough to repay them; so that every time I retire from public life, I am reduced to working for a bookseller for hire. Some of those, proud, obliging people, who preached honor and liberty to me via the post, and who preached them still more loudly to me when I arrived in Paris, resigned from the Council of State; but some were rich, and the rest took care not to resign the lesser offices they held, which guaranteed them the means of existence. They were like the Protestants, who reject various parts of the Catholic dogma and retain others which are just as difficult to believe in. There was nothing total about these sacrifices; nothing of real sincerity: they surrendered an income of ten or fifteen thousand *livres* it is true, but they returned home rich in patrimonies, or at least provided with the daily bread they had prudently retained. In my case, there was no quibbling; they were full of self-abnegation on my behalf, they could not strip themselves sufficiently, on my behalf, of all I possessed: *'Come now, Georges Dandin, pluck up your courage; confound it, son-in-law, don't let us down; off with your coat! Throw two hundred thousand livres a year out the window, a position you find agreeable, an exalted and dignified post, the empire of the Arts in Rome, the happiness of finally receiving the reward for your long laborious struggle. Such is our good pleasure. At that price, you will enjoy our esteem. Just as we have taken off our cloaks, beneath which we are wearing good flannel waistcoats, throw off your velvet cloak, so you are naked. There you have perfect equality, an accord between the altar and the sacrifice.'*

And, strange to relate, in their generous eagerness to push me out, the men who signified their desire to me were neither my true friends nor the co-supporters of my political opinions. I was to destroy myself on the spot for Liberalism, for a doctrine which had constantly attacked me; I was to run the risk of rocking the legitimate throne, in order to win the praises of a few cowardly enemies, who had not enough courage to go hungry.

I was to find myself swamped by my long embassy; the dinners I had given had ruined me, I had not covered the expenses of my initial establishment. But what broke my heart was the loss, for the rest of my days, of that happiness I had promised myself.

I was not obliged to reproach myself in any way with having taken that advice of a Cato, which impoverishes those who accept it not those who give it: quite convinced that such advice is useless anyway to the man who lacks depth of feeling. From the first moment, I say, my decision was made; it cost me little to make, but it was miserable to execute. When at Lourdes, instead of turning south and heading for Italy, I took the road to Pau, my eyes filled with tears, I confess my weakness. What matter that I had indeed accepted and supported the coalition which brought me my good fortune? I chose not to return quickly, so as to let time go by. I slowly unwound the thread of my journey that I had gathered up with such joy only a few weeks previously.

The Prince de Polignac feared my resignation. He felt that in leaving the Chamber I would take Royalist votes with me, and that I would question the existence of his Ministry. The thought was suggested to him of sending a dispatch rider to me in the Pyrenees with an order from the King that I should go to Rome immediately, to welcome the King and Queen of Naples who had just seen their daughter married in Spain. I would have been highly embarrassed to have received such an order. Perhaps I would have considered myself forced to obey it, even if it meant giving in my resignation after it had been fulfilled. But, once in Rome, what would have happened? I would perhaps have been too late; the fatal days to come would have surprised me on the Capitol. Perhaps too the state of indecision I might have been placed in might have given Monsieur de Polignac a parliamentary majority, which he only lacked by a few votes. Then the fatal speech would not have occurred; the decrees, resulting from that speech, would not perhaps have seemed necessary to their unfortunate authors: Dis aliter visum: *the gods decided otherwise*.



## BOOK XXXI

### CHAPTER 3

#### Interview with Monsieur Polignac – I resign from the Rome Embassy

In Paris I found Madame de Chateaubriand quite resigned. She had been thrilled by being the Ambassadors in Rome, and certainly a woman should have at least known that; but in moments of crisis, my wife has never hesitated to approve what she thought correct to maintain consistency in my life, and to enhance my name in public esteem: in that she shows herself finer than others. She loves position, titles and wealth; she hates poverty and thrift; she despises those sensitivities, that excess of loyalty and self-destructiveness which she considers true self-deception for which no one will thank you; she would never have cried: *‘Long live the King, even so’*: but when it was a question of myself, all was different, she accepted my disgrace while cursing it with a firm spirit.

I always had to fast, watch and pray for the health of those who took great care to don the hair shirt with which they hastened to adorn me. I was the sacred donkey, the donkey burdened with the arid remains of liberty; remains which they adored with great devotion, so long as they were excused the trouble of bearing them.

The day after my return to Paris, I went to see Monsieur de Polignac. I had written him this letter on my arrival:

*‘Paris, this 28th of August 1829.*

*Prince,*

*I thought it more fitting as regards our previous friendship, more suited to the noble position with which I have been honored, and above all more respectful to the King, to come and place my resignation at his feet myself, rather than sending it to you hastily via the post. I ask a last service of you, that of asking the King to be so good as to grant me an audience, and to listen to the reasons which oblige me to renounce the Rome Embassy. Consider, Prince, what it costs me, at the moment when you are attaining power, to abandon that diplomatic career which I had the pleasure of introducing to you.*

*Accept, I beg you, my assurance of the feelings which I have vowed to you, and the high regard with which I have the honor to be, Prince,*

*Your very humble and obedient servant,*

CHATEAUBRIAND’

In reply to my letter, this note was sent to me from the Foreign Office:

*‘The Prince de Polignac has the honor to offer his compliments to Monsieur le Vicomte de Chateaubriand, and requests him to come to the Ministry tomorrow, Sunday, at nine precisely, if that is possible.*

*Saturday, 4 o’clock’*

I replied immediately with this further note:

*‘Paris, this evening of the 29th of August, 1829*

*Prince, I have received a letter from your office which invites me to visit the Ministry tomorrow, the 30th, at nine precisely, if that is possible. As this letter does not inform me of the audience with the King which I have begged you to ask of him, I will wait until you have something official to communicate to me regarding the resignation which I desire to lay at His Majesty’s feet.*

*A thousand warm compliments,*

*CHATEAUBRIAND’*

Monsieur de Polignac then wrote me these words in his own hand:

*‘I have received your little note, my dear Vicomte; I will be delighted to see you tomorrow at ten, if that hour suits you.*

*I renew the assurance of my former sincere attachment.*

*LE PRINCE DE POLIGNAC’*

This note seemed to me to augur badly; his diplomatic reserve led me to fear a refusal from the King. I found the Prince de Polignac in the large office which I knew so well. He hastened to me, grasped my hand with a heartfelt warmth which I would have liked to believe was sincere, and then, putting an arm round my shoulders, we began to walk slowly from one end of the office to the other. He told he would not accept my resignation; that the King would not accept it; that I must return to Rome. Each time he repeated this last phrase my heart sank: ‘Why,’ he asked me, ‘*are you unwilling to do business with me as you have with La Ferronays and Portalis? Am I not your friend? I will give you all you wish in Rome; in France, you will be more of a Minister than I, and I will listen to your advice. Your resignation can only create new divisions. Do you wish to harm the government? The King will be very annoyed if you persist in your desire to resign. I beg you, dear Vicomte, do not do this foolish thing.*’

I replied that it was not a foolishness; that I acted while in full possession of my reason; that his government would be very unpopular; that such prejudices might be unjust, but that they existed nevertheless; that all of France was convinced that he would attack public freedom, and that it was impossible for me, a defender of that freedom, to work with those who passed for being its enemy. I was somewhat embarrassed in my reply, since at heart I had no immediate objection to the new Ministers; I could only attack them over a future scenario whose likelihood they might properly reject. Monsieur de Polignac swore to me that he loved the Charter as much as I did; but he loved it in his own way, he loved it too nearly. Unfortunately the tenderness one shows a girl one has dishonored served him little.

The conversation carried on in the same manner for almost an hour. Monsieur de Polignac ended by saying that, if I would consent to withdraw my resignation, the King would see me with pleasure and would listen to what I had to say against his Ministry; but that if I insisted on handing in my resignation, His Majesty thought it would be pointless to see me, and that a conversation between us could only be disagreeable.

I replied: ‘*Consider my resignation as received then, Prince. I have never retracted anything in my life, and, since it does not suit the King to see his loyal subject, I no longer insist.*’ After these words I

withdrew. I begged the Prince to grant Monsieur le Duc de Laval the Rome Embassy, if he still desired it, and I recommended my legation staff to him. I then regained on foot, via the Boulevard des Invalides, the street containing my Infirmery, poor casualty that I was. Monsieur de Polignac seemed to me, as I left him, to possess that imperturbable confidence which made of him a mute eminently suited to strangling an Empire.

My resignation as Ambassador to Rome having been handed in, I wrote to the sovereign Pontiff:

*‘Most Holy Father,*

*As Minister for Foreign Affairs in France in 1823, I had the pleasure of being the interpreter of the late King Louis XVIII’s sentiments regarding the wished-for elevation of Your Holiness to the chair of St. Peter. As Ambassador of His Majesty Charles X at the court of Rome, I had the much greater pleasure of seeing Your Beatitude raised to the sovereign Pontificate, and of hearing His Holiness address me with those words which will be the glory of my life. In ending the noble commission which I have had the honor to fulfil towards him, I express to him the deep regret with which I shall not cease to be penetrated. It only remains for me, Most Holy Father, to lay my sincere thanks for your kindness at your sacred feet, and to ask your apostolic blessing.*

*I am, with the greatest veneration and most profound respect, Your Holiness’ very humble and very obedient servant,*

*CHATEAUBRIAND’*

I spent several days in my Utica tearing out my entrails; I wrote letters demolishing the edifice I had so lovingly constructed. As, when a man dies, it is the little details, the familiar domestic actions that move us, so in the death of a dream the small realities that destroy it are the most poignant. Eternal exile among the ruins of Rome had been my imagined goal. Like Dante, I had determined never to return to my native place. These testamentary elucidations cannot hold the interest for the readers of these *Memoirs* that they hold for me. The old bird falls from the branch where it had taken refuge; it leaves life for death. Caught by the current, it has merely changed streams.

## BOOK XXXI

### CHAPTER 4

#### Journalistic sycophancy

When the swallows near the time for their departure, there is one that is first to take flight and announce the imminent journey to the others: I was the first winged messenger to anticipate the last flight of the Légitimistes. Did the praises with which the newspapers showered me delight me? Not in the least. Some of my friends thought to console me by assuring me that I was on the verge of becoming First Minister; that a round of the game freely played would decide my future: they assumed an ambition in me of which I had not a trace. I doubt that any man who lived with me for even a week would be unable to see my total lack of that passion, otherwise perfectly legitimate, which allows one to pursue a political career to the end. I was always anticipating the moment of my resignation: if I was passionate about the Rome Embassy, it is precisely because it could lead nowhere, and was a retreat into a cul-de-sac.

Finally, I had in the depths of my conscience a certain fear of already having pushed my opposition too far; I would inevitably become its location, center, and focal point: I was afraid of it, and that fear increased my regrets for the tranquil retreat I had lost.

Be that as it may, one is obliged to burn incense before the wooden idol descended from its altar. Monsieur de Lamartine, a new and brilliant representative of France, wrote to me on the subject of his candidacy for the Academy, and ended his letter thus:

*‘Monsieur de La Noue, who has just spent a few minutes with me, told me that he left you occupying your noble leisure with raising a monument to France. Each of your voluntary and courageous resignations has thus brought its tribute of esteem to your name, and glory to your country.’*

This noble letter by the author of Poetic Meditations was followed by that of Monsieur de Lacretelle. He wrote to me in his turn:

*‘What a moment they chose to insult you, a man of sacrifice, you whose fine actions cost you no less than do your fine works! Your resignation and the formation of a new government seem to me two events linked to each other in advance. You have acquainted us with acts of devotion, as Bonaparte acquainted us with victory; but he had many companions, and you have few imitators.’*

Two highly literate men, writers of great merit, Monsieur Abel Rémusat, and Monsieur Saint-Martin, alone had the temerity to set themselves up against me; they were associates of Monsieur le Baron de Damas. I understand why they might have been somewhat annoyed with these people who scorn public office: there is a kind of insolence in it that they cannot abide.

Monsieur Guizot himself deigned to visit me at home; he thought he might bridge the immense distance that nature had placed between us; in approaching me he said these words full of everything that was proper: *‘Monsieur, it is all different these days!’* In that year of 1829, Monsieur Guizot needed me to aid his election prospects; I wrote to the electors of Lisieux; he was nominated; Monsieur de Broglie thanked me in this note:

*‘Permit me to thank you, dear Sir, for the letter you have been good enough to address to me. I have made use of it as I ought, and am convinced that, like all which flows from you, it will bear fruit and beneficial fruit. For my part, I have also taken note of what concerns myself, since there is no event with which I am more closely identified and which inspires in me a more lively interest.’*

The advent of July finding Monsieur Guizot a deputy, it transpired that I was partly the reason for his political rise; the prayer of the humble is sometimes heard in Heaven!

## BOOK XXXI

### CHAPTER 5

#### Monsieur de Polignac's first Cabinet

Monsieur de Polignac's first colleagues were Messieurs de Bourmont, de La Bourdonnaye, de Chabrol, Courvoisier and Montbel.

On the 17th of June 1815, being in Ghent and staying in the Royal residence, I met a man at the foot of the stairs, in a frock coat with muddy boots, going up to see his Majesty. I recognized in that spiritual face, that slender nose and those fine mild serpent-like eyes, General Bourmont; he had deserted Bonaparte's army on the 14th. Comte de Bourmont is a worthy officer, used to navigating difficult actions; but one of those men who, when placed in the front line, see obstacles and cannot overcome them, formed as they are to be led and not to lead: fortunate in his sons, Algiers will ensure his name survives.

The Comte de Bourdonnaye, once my friend, is quite the most awkward customer ever: he lets fly at you if you approach him; he attacks the speakers in the Chamber, as he does his neighbors in the countryside; he quibbles over a word, as he does over a lawsuit concerning a ditch. On the very day I was named Foreign Minister, he came to tell me he was breaking with me: I was a Minister. I smiled and let my male shrew go, who smiling himself, looked like a thwarted bat.

Monsieur de Montbel, initially Minister for Public Education, replaced Monsieur de la Bordonnaye at the Interior Ministry when the latter retired and Monsieur Guernon-Ranville took over from him at Education.

The two sides prepared for war: the government party issued ironic pamphlets against the *Representative* grouping; the opposition organized its affairs and spoke of refusing to pay taxes if the Charter was violated. A public association was formed to resist those in power, called the *Breton Association*: my compatriots had often taken the initiative in previous revolutions; Breton minds own to something of the storm-winds that torment the shores of our peninsula.

A newspaper, produced with the avowed aim of overthrowing the existing dynasty, inflamed opinion. The fine young bookseller Sautelet, driven to suicide by madness, had often wished to assist his party by dying in some startling manner; he was filled with the Republican paper's ideas; Messieurs Thiers, Mignet and Carrel were its editors. The *National's* patron, Monsieur le Prince de Talleyrand, brought not a *sou* to the coffers: he merely soured the journal's spirit by pouring his share of treason and corrosion into the common fund. I received the following note from Monsieur Thiers at the time:

*'Monsieur,*

*Uncertain whether delivery of our new journal will be made correctly, I am sending you the first edition of the National. All my collaborators agree with me in begging you to consider yourself in truth, not as a subscriber, but as our unpaid reader. If in this first issue, a matter of great concern to me, I have succeeded in expressing opinions of which you approve, I will be reassured and certain of being on the right track.*

*Accept, Sir, my homage,*

*A. THIERS'*

I will return to the editors of the *National*; I will tell you how I came to know them; but for the present I must single out Monsieur Carrel: superior to Messieurs Thiers and Mignet, he had the lack of pretension to consider himself, at the time when I associated with him, as a supporter of the writers he headed: he defended with his sword the opinions those men of the pen unsheathed.

## BOOK XXXI

### CHAPTER 6

#### The Expedition to Algiers

While they were gearing up for the fight, preparations for the expedition to Algiers were completed. General Bourmont, the Minister for War, named himself as leader of the expedition: did he wish to escape responsibility for the *coup d'état* he felt was coming? That is quite possible given his past history and his subtlety; but it was a disaster for Charles X. If the general had been in Paris at the time of the catastrophe, the portfolio vacated by the Minister for War would not have fallen into Monsieur de Polignac's hands. Before striking a blow, assuming he would have consented to do so, Monsieur de Bourmont would have doubtless assembled the whole *Royal Guard* in Paris; he would have ensured money and provisions enough that the soldiers would have lacked nothing.

Our Navy revived by the battle at Navarino left those French harbors so neglected formerly. The roads were covered with ships that saluted the land as they departed. Steamboats, new inventions of human genius, came and went carrying orders from one squadron to another, like Sirens or aides de camp of the Admiral. The Dauphin stood on the shore, to which the entire population of the town and surrounding hills had descended: he, who having snatched his relative the King of Spain from the hands of the revolutionaries, saw the day break in which Christianity might be delivered, could he have conceived that he was so near his own eclipse?

It was no longer that age when Catherine de Médici solicited the investiture of the Principality of Algiers for Henri III, not yet King of Poland! Algiers was to become our daughter and our conquest, without anyone's permission, without England daring to prevent us taking that *château of the Emperor*, which recalled Charles V and his fluctuating fortunes. There was great happiness and joy for the French spectators assembled to salute, with Bossuet's salute, the noble vessels ready to break the chains of slavery with their prows; a victory increased by that cry from the Eagle of Meaux, when he announced future success to the great king, as if to console him one day in the grave for the dispersal of his race:

*'You will yield, or fall to this attack, Algiers, rich in Christian spoils. You said in your avaricious heart: "My laws rule the sea, and the nations are my prey." The agility of your vessels gives you confidence, but you will find yourselves attacked within your walls like a pretty bird that one seeks among the rocks in its nest, where it shares what it has scavenged with its brood. You already render up your slaves. Louis has broken the chains with which you burdened his subjects, who were born to be free within his glorious empire. The startled pilots cry as they advance: "What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea."*

Magnificent words, could you not delay the collapse of a throne? The nations march to their fates, like certain of Dante's shades, it is impossible to stop them, even amidst their good fortune.

Those vessels, which brought liberty to the shores of Numidia, carried off the Legitimacy; that fleet under its white banner was the monarchy weighing anchor, leaving the harbors where Saint Louis embarked, when death summoned it to Carthage. Slaves freed from the prisons of Algiers, those who returned you to your country have lost their own homeland; those who snatched you from endless exile are themselves exiled. The master of that vast fleet has crossed the sea as a fugitive in a little boat, and France might say



of him as Cornelia did of Pompey: *'It is because of my fortune, not yours, that I see you now reduced to one small boat, you who...had 500 ships with you when you sailed this sea.'*

Among that crowd on the shore at Toulon who followed with their eyes that fleet departing for Africa, did I not have friends? Had not Monsieur du Plessis, my brother-in-law's brother, taken under his wing a delightful woman, Madame Lenormant, who was awaiting the return of Champollion's friend? What resulted from that hasty flight to Africa? Listen to Monsieur de Penhoen, my compatriot:

*'Barely two months since this same banner had been seen flying over five hundred vessels, in sight of these same shores. Sixty thousand men were then impatient to deploy on the African field of battle. Now a handful of invalids, a few wounded dragging themselves with difficulty round the bridge of our ship were its only followers....At the moment when the Guard presented arms in the customary salute to the flag, when it was raised or lowered, all conversation ceased on the bridge. I doffed my hat with the same respect I might have shown before the aged King himself. I knelt in profound tribute before the power of great misfortune at whose emblem I sadly gazed.'*

## BOOK XXXI

### CHAPTER 7

The opening of the Session of 1830 – The speech – The Chamber is dissolved

The Session of 1830 opened on the 2nd of March. The *Royal Speech* had the King say: ‘*If reprehensible maneuvers create obstacles for my government which I could not and chose not to foresee, I will find the means of overcoming them.*’ Charles X pronounced these words in the tones of a man who, by habit gentle and timid, happens to find himself angered, stirred by the sound of his own voice; the stronger the words, the weaker the resolutions that followed them.

The address in reply was written by Messieurs Étienne and Guizot. It read: ‘*Sire, the Charter consecrates as a right the nation’s intervention in deliberations regarding the public interest. That intervention makes a permanent reconciliation of the views of your government with the desires of the people the indispensable condition for the harmonious progress of public affairs. Sire, our loyalty, our devotion forces us to tell you that this RECONCILIATION DOES NOT EXIST.*’

The address was endorsed by a majority of two hundred and twenty-one to one hundred and eighty-one. An amendment by Monsieur de Lorgeril tried to remove the phrase regarding the *denial of reconciliation*. This amendment only obtained twenty-eight votes. If the two hundred and twenty-one had been able to foresee the result of their vote, the address would have been rejected by an immense majority. Why does Providence not sometimes raise a corner of the veil which hides the future? It gives certain people, it is true, a presentiment of things to come; but they see nothing clearly enough to be quite certain of the route; they fear to overstep the mark, or if they do adventure on predictions which are later fulfilled they are not believed. God never parts the clouds before the deeps in which he works; when he allows great evils, it is because he has great designs; designs which are part of a vast plan, extending to a far horizon beyond the range of our sight and the reach of our passing generations.

The King, replying to the address, declared that his resolution was immutable, that is to say that he would not dismiss Monsieur de Polignac. The dissolution of the Chamber was determined: Messieurs de Peyronnet and de Chantelauze replaced Messieurs de Chabrol and Courvoisier who retired; Monsieur Capelle was named as Minister for Commerce. There were twenty men in the offing capable of being Ministers; they could have recalled Monsieur de Villèle; they could have taken Monsieur Casimir Périer and General Sébastieni. I had already proposed the latter to the King, when after the fall of Monsieur Villèle, the Abbé Frayssinous was charged with offering me the Ministry of Education. But no; they had a horror of able men. In the ardor they felt for nobodies, they found, as if to humiliate France, whoever was most insignificant in order to place them at her head. They dug up Monsieur Guernon de Ranville, who was perhaps the bravest of the band of unknowns, and the Dauphin implored Monsieur de Chantelauze to save the monarchy.

The decree of dissolution summoned the district colleges for the 23rd of June 1830 and the departmental colleges for the 3rd July, only twenty-seven days before the end of the eldest branch of the monarchy.

The parties went to extremes, in their excitement: the Ultra-Royalists spoke of making the Crown a dictatorship; the Republicans dreamed of a Republic with a Directory or under a Convention. The Tribune, a paper affiliated to that party, appeared, and outshone the National. The great majority of the

country still desired the Legitimacy, but with concessions and freedom from Court influence; ambition was rife, and everyone hoped to become a Minister; storms hatch out insects.

Those who wished to force Charles X to become a constitutional monarch thought they were in the right. They believed the Legitimacy was deep-rooted; they had forgotten the weakness of the *man*; *Royalty* could be pressurized, the *King* could not: the individual failed us, not the institution.

## BOOK XXXI

### CHAPTER 8

The new Chamber – I leave for Dieppe – The decrees of the 25th of July – I return to Paris – Reflections on the way – A letter to Madame Récamier

The new Chamber's deputies arrived in Paris: of the two hundred and twenty-one, two hundred and ten had been re-elected; the opposition had two hundred and seventy votes; the government a hundred and forty-five: the party of the *Court* was therefore finished. The natural result was the resignation of the Government: Charles X persisted in braving all and the *coup d'état* was inevitable.

I left for Dieppe on the 26th of July, at four in the morning, on the very day the decrees appeared. I was quite joyful, delighted to be seeing the sea once more, and I was followed, at some hours distance, by a frightful storm. I dined and slept at Rouen without suspecting anything, regretting that I was unable to visit Saint-Ouen, and kneel before the lovely Madonna in the museum, in memory of Raphael and Rome. I arrived in Dieppe next day, the 27th, around noon. I stayed at the hotel where Monsieur le Comte de Boissy, my former secretary at the legation, had arranged lodgings for me. I dressed and went to meet Madame Récamier. She occupied an apartment whose windows opened onto the foreshore. I spent several hours there talking and watching the waves. Suddenly Hyacinthe arrived; he brought me a letter that Monsieur de Boissy had received, announcing the decrees, with a flourish of praise. A moment later, my old friend Ballanche came in; he had arrived in the coach clasping the newspapers in his hands. I opened the Moniteur and read the official news, scarcely believing my eyes. Here was a government which, with deliberate intent, was hurling itself from the towers of Notre Dame! I told Hyacinthe to request horses, so as to leave for Paris again. I took a carriage, towards seven in the evening, leaving my friends in a state of anxiety. There had been murmurings of a *coup d'état* for a month or so, but no one had paid attention to the rumors, which seemed absurd. Charles X had spun illusions about the throne; he had created a mirage before the Princes which deceived them by displacing objects, and inspiring them to see imaginary countries in the sky.

I brought the *Moniteur* with me. As soon as it was daylight, on the 28th, I read, re-read, and commented on the decrees. The report to the King serving as a prolegomenon struck me from two perspectives: the observations on the disadvantages of the Press were just; but at the same time the author of those observations showed complete ignorance of the true state of society. Doubtless the Ministries, since 1814, of whatever persuasion, had been harassed by the papers; doubtless the Press tends to smother sovereignty, and drives royalty and the Chambers to obey it; doubtless, during the final days of the Restoration, the Press, blinded by passion, had, without regard to French honor and interests, attacked the expedition to Algiers, elaborating on the reasons, means, and preparations for it, and the chances of non-success; it had divulged confidential details of the armaments, revealed the state of our forces to the enemy, tallied our troops and ships, even indicated the point of embarkation. Would Cardinal Richelieu and Bonaparte have brought Europe to its knees before France, if they had thus revealed in advance the secrets of their negotiations, or signaled the halting places of their armies?

All that is true and shameful; but what is the remedy? The Press is an element once unseen, a force previously unknown, now active in the world; it is the word as lightening; it is social electricity. Can you prevent it existing? The more you try to suppress it, the more violent the explosion will be. You must resolve to live with it, as you live with the steam-engine. You must teach it to serve you, by robbing it of

its dangers, either by weakening it little by little through familiar everyday use, or by gradually adjusting your laws and manners to the principles which will rule humanity from now on. A proof of the powerlessness of the Press in certain situations emerges from the very reproach you made against it in regard to the Algiers expedition; you took Algiers, despite the freedom of the Press, just as I undertook the war in Spain in 1823 beneath the most withering fire produced by that freedom.

But what is intolerable to read in the Ministers' reports is that pretentious effrontery: that the KING HAS POWERS THAT PRE-DATE THE LAWS. What is the point of a constitution then? Why deceive the people with false guarantees, when the monarch can alter the established order of government at will? And yet the signatories of the report were so convinced of what they said, that they took pains to cite article 14, with the benefit of which, as I had declared long ago, they could *appropriate the Charter*; they mentioned it, but only for the record, and as a superfluous right which they did not need to employ.

The first decree established the suppression of Press freedom in its various forms; it was the quintessence of all that had been elaborated in the cubby-holes of the police department over fifteen years.

The second decree reworked the electoral laws. Thus the two primary freedoms, the freedom of the Press and electoral freedom, were radically harmed: this emanated not from an iniquitous though legal action of a corrupt legislative authority, but by *decree*, as in the days of royal whim. And five men not lacking in common sense hurled themselves, their master, the monarchy, France and Europe, with unexampled rashness, into the abyss. I was unaware what was happening in Paris. I desired a resistance movement to force the Crown, without overthrowing the throne, to dismiss the Ministers and withdraw the decrees. In the event that the latter triumphed, I was resolved not to submit, but to write and speak out against these unconstitutional measures.

If the members of the diplomatic corps did not directly influence the decrees, they favored them with their votes; Europe had an absolute horror of our *Charter*. When the news of the decrees arrived in Berlin and Vienna, and for twenty-four hours they were considered a success, *Monsieur Ancillon* proclaimed that Europe was saved, and *Prince von Metternich* showed inexpressible joy. After learning the truth, the latter was as concerned as he had been delighted; he declared that he was mistaken, that public opinion was decidedly liberal, and that he was accustoming himself already to the idea of an Austrian constitution.

The nominations of the Councilors of State which followed the July ordinances threw some light on the people who, in the antechambers, by their advice or their writings, had been prepared to support the decrees. The men most opposed to representative government were signaled out. Were those fatal documents penned in the very office of the King, under the monarch's own eyes? Were they written in Monsieur de Polignac's office? Were they agreed in a meeting solely of Ministers or were they assisted by a few loyal anti-constitutional minds? Was it *under the Leads*, in some secret session of the *Ten*, that those decisions of July were made, in virtue of which the Legitimacy was condemned to strangulation on the *Bridge of Sighs*? Were the decrees *Monsieur de Polignac's* own idea? Perhaps that is something history will never reveal.

Arriving in *Gisors*, I learnt of the uprising in Paris, and heard various alarming proposals; they proved how seriously the Charter had been taken by the population of France. At *Pontoise*, there was more recent news still, but confusing and contradictory. At *Herblay*, there were no post-horses. I waited almost an hour. I was advised to avoid Saint-Denis, because I would find it barricaded. At *Courbevoie*, the postilion

had already abandoned his jacket with its fleur-de-lis buttons. He had spent the morning with a calash which he had conducted to Paris via the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. Consequently, he told me he would not take me that way, and would head for the Barrière de Trocadero, to the right of the Barrière de l'Étoile. From this gate Paris is revealed. I saw the tricolor flag flying; I judged that it was not merely a riot, but a revolution. I had the presentiment that my role would be altered: that having hastened to defend public freedoms, I would be obliged to defend Royalty. Clouds of white smoke rose here and there among the houses. I heard cannon-shot and the sound of muskets blended with the noise of the alarm-bells. From the height of the empty plateau destined by Napoleon as the site of the palace of the King of Rome, it seemed I was watching the ancient Louvre fall. The observation post presented one of those philosophic consolations that one disaster offers another.

My carriage descended the slope. I crossed the Pont d'Iéna, and ascended the paved avenue along the Champs de Mars. All was deserted. I found a cavalry picket posted before the railings of the Military College; the men had a sad air as if forgotten. We took the Boulevard des Invalides and the Boulevard Montparnasse. I encountered several passers-by who gazed with astonishment at a carriage led by a postilion as if these were normal times. The Boulevard d'Enfer was blocked by felled elm-trees.

In my street, my neighbors were delighted at my arrival: I seemed to offer a protection to the whole quarter. Madame de Chateaubriand was at once comforted and alarmed by my return.

On the morning of Thursday the 29th of July, I wrote this letter, lengthened by its postscript, to Madame Récamier, at Dieppe:

*'Thursday morning, the 29th of July 1830*

*I write to you without knowing if my letter will arrive, since the couriers are no longer leaving.*

*I entered Paris in the midst of a cannonade, a fusillade, and the sounds of the tocsin. This morning, the alarm-bell is still sounding, but I can no longer hear gunfire; it seems that there is an element of organization and that resistance will continue until the decrees are repealed. This is the immediate result (without calling it the definitive result) of the perjury by which the Ministers have wronged the Crown, at least in appearance!*

*The National Guard, the École Polytechnique, all are involved. I have seen nobody as yet. You may judge in what state I found Madame de Chateaubriand. Anyone, who, like her, witnessed the 10th of August and the 2nd of September, retains a permanent memory of the Terror. One regiment, the 5th of the Line, has already gone over to the side of the Charter. Certainly Monsieur de Polignac is greatly to blame; his lack of ability is a poor excuse; an ambition for which one has not the talent is a crime. They say the Court is at Saint-Cloud and ready to flee.*

*I will not speak of myself; my position is tiresome but straightforward. I will betray neither the King nor the Charter, neither the Legitimacy nor freedom. I have nothing more to say or do than wait and weep for my country. God only knows what will happen in the provinces; they already speak of an insurrection at Rouen. On another front, the Congregation will arm the Chouans and the Vendée. What Empires depend on! A decree and six Ministers without talent or virtue are enough to turn the most tranquil and flourishing country into one of the most troubled and unfortunate.'*

‘Mid-day

*The firing has recommenced. It seems they are attacking the Louvre where the Kings troops are entrenched. The suburb I live in is beginning to revolt. They talk of a provisional government whose leaders would be General Gérard, the Duc de Choiseul and Monsieur de Lafayette.*

*This letter will probably not leave Paris, since the city is declared to be in a state of siege. Marshal Marmont commands for the King. They say he has been killed, but I do not believe it. Try not to worry too much. God protect you! We will meet again!’*

‘Friday

*This letter was written yesterday; there was no way of sending it. All is over: the popular victory is complete; the King has yielded on all points; but I fear they will now go way beyond the concessions made by the Crown. I wrote to His Majesty this morning. Meanwhile, I have a total scheme of future sacrifice which appeals to me. We will speak of it when you arrive.*

*I am going to put this letter in the post myself, and reconnoitre Paris.’*

**End of Book XXXI**

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 1

#### The July Revolution: the 26th of July

The decrees, dated the 25th of July, were published in the Moniteur on the 26th. The secret had been so well kept that neither the Marshal Duke of Ragusa, Major-General of the Guard, who was in command, nor Monsieur Mangin, Prefect of Police, were apprised of it. The Prefect for the Seine only knew of his orders via the Moniteur, as did the Under-Secretary of State for War, though it was these various leaders who had the disposition of the various armed forces. The Prince de Polignac, charged in the interim with Monsieur de Bourmont's portfolio, was so unconcerned with this trivial business of the decrees, that he spent the 26th presiding at an award ceremony at the War Ministry.

The King left for the hunt on the 26th, before the Moniteur had arrived at Saint-Cloud, and he did not return from Rambouillet until midnight.

At last the Duke of Ragusa received word from Monsieur de Polignac:

*'Your Excellency is aware of the extraordinary measures which the King, in his wisdom and his feelings of affection for his people, has judged necessary to maintain the rights of the Crown and public order. In these vital circumstances, His Majesty counts on your zeal to ensure order and calm in the whole area under your command.'*

This audacity displayed by the weakest of men, against a force which was about to crush an empire, could never be explained except as a kind of hallucination, resulting from the advice of a miserable clique who are never to be found when danger threatens. The newspaper editors, having consulted Messieurs Dupin, Odilon Barrot, Barthe, and Mérilhou, resolved to publish their papers without clearance, in order to be arrested and then plead the illegality of the decrees. They met at the offices of the National: Monsieur Thiers drafted a protest which was signed by forty-four journalists, and which appeared, on the morning of the 27th, in the National and Le Temps.

At the end of the day a handful of Deputies met at the house of Monsieur Laborde. They agreed to meet the following day at Monsieur Casimir Périer's. There appeared, for the first time, one of the three powers which would occupy the scene: the Monarchy was located in the Chamber of Deputies, the Usurpation at the Palais-Royal, and the Republic at the Hôtel de Ville. In the evening, crowds assembled at the Palais-Royal; they threw stones at Monsieur de Polignac's carriage. When the Duke of Ragusa saw the King at Saint-Cloud, on his return from Rambouillet, the King asked him the news from Paris: '*Stocks are down. – By how much?*' the Dauphin asked. '*By three francs*', the Marshal replied. '*They will recover*', the Dauphin replied; and everyone left.



## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 2

#### The July Revolution: the 27th of July

The 27th had begun badly. The King had invested the Duke of Ragusa with command of Paris: which was tempting misfortune. At one o'clock, the Marshal installed himself in the Guard Headquarters on the Place du Carrousel. Monsieur Mangin sent men to seize the National's presses; Monsieur Carrel resisted; Messieurs Mignet and Thiers, thinking the game was up, disappeared for two days: Monsieur Thiers went into hiding in the Montmorency Valley, at the house of a certain Madame de Courchamp, a relative of the two Messieurs Béquet, of whom one worked for the National and the other for the Journal des Débats.

At Le Temps, the thing took a more serious turn: the true journalistic hero was incontestably Monsieur Coste.

In 1823, Monsieur Coste ran *Les Tablettes universelles*: accused by his collaborators of having sold the paper, he fought a duel and received a sword-thrust. Monsieur Coste was presented to me at the Foreign Ministry; speaking to him of the freedom of the Press, I said: '*Monsieur, you know how much I love and respect that freedom; but how do you expect me to defend it to Louis XVIII when every day you attack royalty and religion! I beg you, in your own interest and to preserve my forces intact, do not sap the ramparts which are three parts demolished, and which in truth a brave man would be ashamed to attack. Let us do a deal: no longer attack a few weak old men whom the throne and the sanctuary barely protect: I will hand myself over to you in exchange. Attack me day and night; say what you will of me, I will never complain; I will thank you for your legitimate and constitutional attack on a Minister, and for keeping the King out of it.*'

Monsieur Coste retained from this interview a measure of esteem for me.

A confrontation regarding the constitution took place at the office of Le Temps between Monsieur Baude and a Police commissioner.

The Attorney-General issued forty-four warrants against the signatories to the journalists' protest.

Around two o'clock, the Revolution's monarchist party met at Monsieur Périer's, as they had agreed to do the day before: nothing was concluded. The Deputies adjourned the meeting till the following day, the 28th, at Monsieur Audry de Puyraveau's house. Monsieur Casimir Périer, a man of order and means, did not wish to fall into the hands of the people; he still cherished hopes of coming to terms with the Legitimacy; he said sharply to Monsieur de Schonen: '*You are ruining us by flouting the law; you are losing us a superb position.*' This spirit of legality ruled everywhere; it appeared during two contrasting meetings, one at Monsieur Cadet-Gassicourt's, the other at General Gourgaud's. Monsieur Périer belonged to that middle class which appointed itself heir to the people and the army. He had courage, and fixity of purpose; he flung himself bravely athwart the revolutionary torrent to damn it; but he was over-occupied with his health and too careful of his wealth. '*What can you do with a man,*' said Monsieur Decazes to me, '*who is always inspecting his tongue in the mirror?*'

The crowd grew and began to arm, and the Commander of the Gendarmerie came to warn the Duke of Ragusa that he had insufficient men and was fearful of being overwhelmed. The Marshal then made his military dispositions.

It was already half past four on the afternoon of the 27th, before the barracks received orders to take up arms. The Paris Gendarmerie, supported by a few Guards detachments, tried to re-open the Rue Richelieu and the Rue Saint-Honoré. One of these detachments was assailed in the Rue du *Duc-de-Bordeaux* (Rue du Vingt-Neuf-Jeuillet) by a shower of stones. The leader of this detachment was holding fire, when a shot rang out from the *Hôtel Royal* on the Rue des Pyramides, and decided the matter: it seems that a certain Mr. Folks, staying at this hotel, had armed himself with his shooting-piece, and fired at the Guards from his window. The soldiers replied with a volley towards the house, and Mr. Folks and two servants were killed. This is the way that these English, who live a sheltered life in their island, transport revolution elsewhere; you find them mixed up in quarrels which are no concern of theirs, in the four corners of the world: if they can sell a piece of calico what matter if it plunges a nation into endless calamities. What right had this Mr. Folks to shoot at French soldiers? Had Charles X violated the British Constitution? If anything could tarnish the struggles of July it would be for them to have been started by an English bullet.

The first battles, which did not begin until about five in the afternoon of the 27th ended at dusk. The gunsmiths handed their weapons to the crowd, the street-lamps were either broken or remained unlit; the tricolor flag was hoisted in the darkness on the towers of Notre Dame: the storming of the guard-houses, the taking of the Arsenal and the powder-magazines, and the disarming of the militiamen, was completed without opposition on the morning of the 28th, and by eight everything was over.

The Revolution's democratic and proletarian party in smocks or half-naked was under arms; it did not spare its rags and poverty. The people, represented by electors chosen from various groupings, managed to call a meeting at Monsieur Cadet-Gassicourt's.

The party of Usurpation had not yet shown itself: its leader, hiding outside Paris, was uncertain whether to go to Saint-Cloud or the Palais-Royal. The middle-class or monarchical party, the Deputies, deliberated and refused to be drawn into the movement.

Monsieur de Polignac took himself to Saint-Cloud and at five in the morning on the 28th persuaded the King to sign the decree placing Paris under martial law.

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 3

#### The July Revolution: military action on the 28th of July

On the 28th the crowds re-grouped in greater numbers; with the cry of '*Long live, the Charter!*' which could still be heard, were already mingled cries of '*Long live Liberty! Down with the Bourbons!*' They also shouted: '*Long Live, the Emperor! Long live, the Black Prince!*' that mysterious shadowy Prince who appears in the popular imagination in all revolutions. Memories and previous passions were forgotten; they dragged down and burnt the arms of France; they hung them from the cords of broken street-lamps; they tore the *fleur-de-lis* badges from the coachmen's and postmen's uniforms; the notaries took down their escutcheons, the bailiffs removed their badges, the carriers their official signs, the Royal suppliers their warrants. Those who had previously covered their oil-painted Napoleonic eagles with Bourbon lilies in distemper only needed a sponge to wipe out their loyalty; nowadays empires and gratitude are effaced with a little water.

The Duke of Ragusa wrote to the King saying that it was essential to bring about calm, and that by the next day, the 29th, it would be too late. A messenger from the Prefect of Police came to ask the Marshal if it was true that Paris had been placed under martial law: the Marshal, who knew nothing about it, looked surprised; he hurried to the President of the Council's residence; there he found the Ministers gathered, and Monsieur de Polignac handed him the decree. Because the man who had trampled the world underfoot had placed cities and whole provinces under martial law, Charles X thought he could imitate him. The Ministers told the Marshal that they were about to install themselves at the Guard Headquarters.

No orders having arrived from Saint-Cloud, at nine in the morning on the 28th, when there was no longer time to retain anything, but there was time to recapture everything, the Marshal ordered the troops, who had already shown themselves the day before, from barracks. No precaution had been taken to lay in provisions at the Headquarters in the Carrousel. The storehouse, which they had forgotten to guard adequately, was taken. The Duke of Ragusa, a man of intellect and merit, a brave soldier, and a wise but unlucky general, proved for the thousandth time that military ability is insufficient to handle civil disturbance; any police officer would have had a better idea than the Marshal as to what should be done. Perhaps his thoughts were paralyzed by memories; he remained as if stifled by the weight of fatality associated with his name.

The Marshal, who had only a handful of men with him, devised a plan which would have needed thirty thousand soldiers for its execution. Columns were deployed over vast distances, while one was ordered to occupy the Hôtel de Ville. The troops, having completed their operations to restore order everywhere, were to converge on the municipal building. The Carrousel became the headquarters: orders emerged from it, and information ended up there. A Swiss battalion, pivoting on the Marché des Innocents, was charged with opening communications between the forces of the center and those which covered the circumference. The soldiers from the Popincourt Barracks prepared to descend by various routes on positions from which they could be deployed. General Latour-Mauborg was lodged in the Invalides. When he saw things were going badly, he proposed to house the regiments in Louis XIV's edifice; he claimed he could feed them, and defy the Parisians to take it. Not for nothing had he left a limb on the Imperial field of battle, and the Borodino redoubts knew how he kept his word. But what did the courage and experience of a crippled veteran count for? They ignored his advice.

Under the command of the Comte de Saint-Chamans, the first Guards column left the Madeleine to follow the boulevards as far as the Bastille. After a few paces a squad commanded by Monsieur Sala was attacked; the Royalist officer repelled the attack in a lively manner. As they advanced, the communication posts established en route, being too weakly defended and too far apart, were isolated by the mob, and separated from one another by fallen trees and barricades. There was a bloody business at the Saint-Denis gate and at that of Saint-Martin. Monsieur de Saint-Chamans, traversing the theatre of Fieschi's future exploits, encountered numerous groups of men and women in the Place de la Bastille. He invited them to disperse, giving them money; but they did not cease pillaging the neighboring houses. He was forced to relinquish the attempt to reach the Hôtel de Ville by the Rue Saint-Antoine, and having crossed the Pont d'Austerlitz he regained the Carrousel from the southern boulevards. Turenne in front of the still-extant Bastille had been more fortunate on behalf of the mother of the young Louis XIV.

The column entrusted with occupying the Hôtel-de-Ville followed the Quais des Tuileries, du Louvre, and de l'École, crossed the Pont Neuf to its mid-point, took the Quai de l'Horlogue, and the Flower Market, and reached the Place de Grève by the Pont Notre-Dame. Two platoons of Guards created a diversion by making for the new suspension bridge. A battalion of the 15th Light Infantry supported the Guards, and was to leave two platoons at the Flower Market.

The passage of the Seine via the Pont Notre-Dame was disputed. The mob, with drums beating, faced the Guards bravely. The officer in command of the Royal Artillery pointed out to the mass of people that they were risking their lives pointlessly, and that without cannon they would be shot down without any chance of their succeeding. The crowd stood firm; the guns were fired. The soldiers streamed onto the embankments and into the Place de Grève, where two more Guards platoons joined them via the Pont d'Arcole. They had been obliged to force their way through crowds of students from the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. The Hôtel de Ville was duly occupied.

A barricade was raised at the entrance to the Rue du Mouton; a brigade of Swiss Guards carried this barricade; the people, rushing from adjacent streets, retook the position with loud cries. The barricade ultimately remained in the hands of the Guards.

In all those poor working-class districts the people fought spontaneously without ulterior motives: French recklessness, mocking, intrepid and joyful, had filled everyone's head; for our nation, glory possesses the effervescence of Champagne. Women at the windows urged on men in the streets; notes promised a Marshal's baton to the first Colonel who would go over to the people; crowds marched along to the sound of the violin. There were scenes of tragedy and comedy, circus-antics and triumphal displays: oaths and shouts of laughter could be heard amid musket-shots, clouds of smoke, and the dull roar of the crowd. Carriers with improvised permits signed by unknown leaders, bare-footed, and with forage-caps on their heads, drove convoys of wounded through the combatants, who parted for them.

In the wealthy districts a totally different spirit prevailed. The National Guard, having resumed the uniforms that had previously been taken from them, assembled in vast numbers at the Mairie of the 1st Arrondissement to maintain order. In encounters the Guards suffered more than the mob, being exposed to fire from enemies concealed in the houses. Others can name the drawing-room heroes who recognizing various Guards officers amused themselves by shooting them down, from the safety of a shutter or a chimney-stack. In the street, animosity between workman and soldier barely went beyond striking a blow: when wounded, they helped each other. The people rescued several of their victims. Two officers,

Monsieur de Goyon and Monsieur Rivaux, after a heroic defence, owed their lives to the generosity of their conquerors. A Guards captain, Kaumann, was struck on the head by an iron bar: stunned and with blood-filled eyes, he beat up with his sword the bayonets of his soldiers who were taking aim at the workman responsible.

The Guard was full of Bonaparte's grenadiers. Several officers lost their lives, among them Lieutenant Noirot, a man of exceptional courage, who had received the cross of the Legion of Honor from Prince Eugène in 1813 for a feat of arms performed in one of the redoubts at Caldiera. Colonel de Pleinneselve, mortally wounded at the Porte Saint-Martin, had fought in the Empire's wars in Holland and Spain, with the Grand Army and in the Imperial Guard. At the Battle of Leipzig, he captured the Austrian General von Merveldt. Carried to the hospital of Gros-Caillou by his soldiers, he refused to have his wounds dressed until last. Dr. Larrey, whose father he had known on other battlefields, amputated his leg at the thigh; it was too late to save him. Those noble adversaries who had seen so many cannonballs pass over their heads were fortunate if they avoided a bullet from one of those freed convicts whom justice has found once more, following the day of victory, in the ranks of the victors! Those galley-slaves could not defile the national Republican triumph; they have merely tarnished Louis-Philippe's royalty. Thus there perished, obscurely, in the streets of Paris, the last of those famous soldiers who had escaped the cannon-fire at Borodino, Lützen and Leipzig: under Charles X, we massacred those brave men we had so admired under Napoleon. One victim more was missing: that man had disappeared at St. Helena.

At night-fall, a junior officer in disguise brought an order for the troops at the Hôtel de Ville to fall back on the Tuileries. The retreat was made hazardous by the wounded they would not abandon, and the artillery which had to be manoeuvred with difficulty through the barricades. However it was completed without incident. When the troops returned from the various districts of Paris they expected to find the King and Dauphin standing with them: seeking in vain for a sight of the white banner on the Pavillon d'Horlogue, they expressed themselves in the vigorous language of the military camps.

It is not true, as is said, that the Hôtel de Ville had been taken from the people by the Guard, and was taken back by the people from the Guard. When the Guard arrived, they experienced no resistance, since there was no one there, even the *Prefect* had left. These boasts lessen and cast doubt on the real dangers. The Guard was badly deployed in winding streets; the advance, first by its stance of neutrality, and then through defection, completed the evil that the deployment, fine in theory but hardly executable in practice, had begun. The 50th of the Line arrived, during the engagement, at the Hôtel de Ville; dropping with fatigue, they hastened to withdraw within the defenses of the Hotel, and gave their weary comrades their unused and useless cartridges.

The Swiss battalion still at the Marché des Innocents was extricated by a second Swiss battalion; they both ended up at the Quai de l'École, and stationed themselves at the Louvre.

Now the barricades are sanctuaries that belong to Parisian invention: they have appeared during all our disturbances, from the days of Charles V to our own.

*'The people seeing the forces deployed through the streets,' says L'Estoile, 'began to rouse themselves, and built barricades in the manner everyone knows of: several Swiss, who went to earth in a ditch in the square in front of Notre Dame, were killed; the Duc de Guise being on his way through the*

*streets, whoever was there shouted: "Long live Guise!" and he, doffing his large hat, said: "My friends, enough; gentlemen, you go too far; you must shout Long live the King!"*

Why have these recent barricades of ours, whose effect has been so powerful, been so little spoken of, while the barricades of 1588, which delivered almost nothing, are so interesting to read about? Therein lies the difference in century and personalities: the sixteen century had all before it; the nineteenth has left all behind: Monsieur de Puyraveau is not Le Balafre.

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 4

#### The July Revolution: civil action on the 28th of July

If you ignore the fighting, the civil and political revolution ran parallel to the military one. The soldiers detained at the Abbaye were set at liberty; the debtors imprisoned at Saint-Pélagie escaped, and those condemned for political errors were freed: a revolution is a jubilee; it absolves all crimes and permits greater ones.

The Ministers took council at headquarters: they decided to arrest, as the ring-leaders of the movement, Messieurs Lafitte, Lafayette, Gérard, Marchais, Salverte and Audry de Puyraveau; the Marshal gave the order; but when they were sent to him later as representatives, he thought it beneath his honor to execute his own order.

A meeting of the monarchist party composed of Peers and Deputies took place at Monsieur Guizot's: the Duc de Broglie was there; Messieurs Thiers and Mignet, who had re-emerged, and Monsieur Carrel, though of a different opinion, arrived. It was there that the party of Usurpation pronounced the name of the Duc d'Orléans for the first time. Monsieur Thiers and Monsieur Mignet went to see General Sébastiani to talk to him about the Prince. The General replied in an evasive way; the Duc d'Orléans, he assured them, had never entertained any such ideas and had authorized nothing.

Around noon, still on the 28th, the general meeting of Deputies took place at Monsieur Audry de Puyraveau's residence. Monsieur de Lafayette, leader of the Republican Party, had returned to Paris on the 27th; Monsieur Lafitte, leader of the Orléanist Party, did not arrive until the night of the 27th; he went to the Palais-Royal, where he found no one; he left for Neuilly: the King-in-waiting was not there.

At Monsieur de Puyraveau's they discussed a planned protest against the decrees. This more than moderate protest evaded the main issues entirely.

Monsieur Casimir Périer advised that someone should hasten to see the Duke of Ragusa; while the five Deputies chosen to do so were getting ready to leave, Monsieur Arago was already at the Marshal's: he had decided, following a message from Madame de Boigne, to anticipate the representatives. He suggested to the Marshal the need to put an end to the disturbances in the capital. The Duke of Ragusa went to discuss it at Monsieur de Polignac's; the latter, informed of the troops' reluctance, declared that if they went over to the people, they should be fired on as insurgents. General Tromelin, who was a witness to this conversation, lost his temper with General d'Ambrugeac. Then the deputation arrived. Monsieur Lafitte spoke for them: *'We come,'* he said, *'to ask you to stop the letting of blood. If the struggle continues, it will not only result in disastrous cruelty, but utter revolution.'* The Marshal confined himself to the question of military honor, maintaining that the people must be the first to cease fighting. He added however this postscript to a letter he wrote to the King: *'I think it urgent that Your Majesty profit without delay from the overtures that have been made.'*

The Duke of Ragusa's aide de camp, Colonel Komierowski, escorted to the King's office at Saint-Cloud, handed him the letter; the King said: *'I will read the letter.'* The Colonel withdrew and awaited orders; finding that they did not arrive, he begged Monsieur le Duc de Duras to go and ask them of the King. The

Duke replied that, according to etiquette, it was impossible to enter the office. At last, summoned by the King, Monsieur Komierowski was told to urge the Marshal to *stand firm*.

General Vincent, for his part, hastened to Saint-Cloud; having forced open the door which had been refused him, he told the King that all was lost: 'My dear sir,' Charles X replied, '*you are a fine general, but you do not understand any of this.*'



## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 5

#### The July Revolution: military action on the 29th of July

The 29<sup>th</sup> saw the appearance of fresh combatants: the students of the École Polytechnique, in collaboration with one of their old comrades, Monsieur Charras, forced the issue and sent four of their number, Messieurs Lothon, Berthelin, Pinsonnière and Tourneux, to offer their services to Messieurs Lafitte, Périer and Lafayette. These young men, distinguished in their studies, were already known to the Allies, when they presented themselves before Paris in 1814; during the Three Days they became popular leaders, the crowd placing them at their head with perfect trust. Some students went to the Place de l'Odéon, others to the Palais-Royal and the Tuileries.

The order of the day published on the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> offended the Guard: it announced that the King, wishing to show his satisfaction with his brave servants, granted them a month and a half's pay; an unseemly action which the French soldiers resented: it valued them like the English who would not march, or rebelled, if they had not received their money.

During the night of the 28th, the people had stripped the paving stones from the streets for twenty yards on either side and the next day, at day-break, four thousand barricades had been erected in Paris.

The Palais-Bourbon was guarded by troops of the Line, the Louvre by two Swiss battalions, the Rue de la Paix, the Place Vendôme, and the Rue Castiglione by the 5th and 53rd of the Line. Nearly twelve hundred infantrymen arrived from Saint-Denis, Versailles and Rueil.

The military position improved: the troops were more concentrated, and they had to cross large empty spaces to reach each other. General Exelmans, who had judged these deployments well, arrived, at eleven o'clock to place his courage and experience at the disposition of the Duke of Ragusa, while for his part General Pajol presented himself to the Deputies in order to take command of the National Guard.

The Ministers had the idea of convoking the Royal Court at the Tuileries, so far were they from understanding the needs of the moment! The Marshal urged the President of the Council to repeal the decrees. During their conversation, Monsieur de Polignac was summoned; he went out and found Monsieur Bertier, the son of the first victim sacrificed in 1789, who having crossed Paris, declared that everything was going better as far as the Royalist cause was concerned: it is a fatality that the members of that race, who were entitled to revenge, were hurled into the grave during our first troubles, and invoked in our recent misfortunes. Those misfortunes were nothing new; since 1793, Paris had grown accustomed to watch events and Kings pass by.

While, according to the Royalist reports, everything was going well, the defection of the 5th and 53rd regiments of the Line was announced, who joined forces with the people.

The Duke of Ragusa proposed a suspension of the fighting: it was carried out in some places and not executed in others. The Marshal had sent for one of the two Swiss battalions stationed at the Louvre. He was sent the battalion which was garrisoning the colonnade. The Parisians, seeing the colonnade deserted, approached the walls and entered via the imitation doors which led to the inner Garden of the Infanta; they gained the crossroads and fired on the battalion stationed in the courtyard. Terrified by the memory

of the 10th of August, the Swiss rushed from the palace and threw themselves among their third battalion which was situated facing the Parisians outposts, but was observing the suspension of fighting. The people, who had reached the Gallerie Musée of the Louvre, began to fire, from amidst masterpieces, on the lancers lined up in the Carrousel. The Parisians outposts, carried away by their example, broke the armistice. Driven beneath the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, the Swiss pushed the lancers into the portico of the Pavillon de l'Horloge and emerged pell-mell into the Tuileries Garden. Young Farcy was killed in this skirmish: his name is inscribed on the corner of the café near where he fell; and a beetroot processing plant exists today at Thermopylae! The Swiss had three or four soldiers wounded or killed: this handful of dead has been portrayed as an incredible butchery.

The crowd, with Messieurs Thomas, Bastide, and Guinard entered the Tuileries by means of the wicket-gate at the Pont Royal. A tricolor flag was planted on the Pavillon de l'Horloge, as in Bonaparte's time, apparently in memory of freedom. The furniture was torn apart, the paintings hacked by sabre blows; in the armory the diary of the King's hunts was found and that of the fine slaughter executed on partridges: an old custom of the royal gamekeepers. A corpse was placed on the empty throne in the Throne Room: that would be dreadful if the French, these days, were not always indulging in theatricals. The Artillery Museum, at Saint-Thomas-d'Aquaine, was pillaged, and the centuries passed along the riverbank, beneath the helmet of Godfrey de Bouillon, and the lance of Francis I.

Then the Duke of Ragusa quitted headquarters, leaving behind a hundred and twenty thousand francs in sacks. He left by the Rue de Rivoli and went to the Tuileries Garden. He gave the order for the troops to withdraw, first to the Champs Élysées and then as far as l'Étoile. It was thought peace had been made, and that the Dauphin was coming; several carriages from the stables, and a wagon, crossed the Place Louis XV: it was the Ministers leaving their posts.

Arriving at l'Étoile, Marmont received a letter: it announced to him that the King had appointed Monsieur le Dauphin commander-in-chief of the troops, and that he, the Marshal, was to serve under his command.

A company of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Regiment had been overlooked in the house of a hatter on the Rue de Rohan; after lengthy resistance the house was taken. Captain Meunier, struck by three bullets, leapt from a third-floor window, fell onto the roof below, and was carried to the Gros-Caillou hospital: he survived. The Babylone barracks, attacked between noon and one by three students from the École Polytechnique, Vaneau, Lacroix and D'Ouvrier, was only defended by a depot of Swiss recruits about a hundred strong; Major Dufay, of French origin commanding: for thirty years he had served with us; he had been an actor in the highest dramas of the Republic and Empire. Called on to surrender, he refused to accept any conditions and shut himself in the barracks. Young Vaneau perished. Incendiaries set fire to the barrack-room doors; the door collapsed; immediately, Major Dufay emerged through this flaming maw, followed by his mountaineers with fixed bayonets; he fell to musket-fire from the keeper of an inn nearby: his death saved his Swiss recruits; they regained the various corps to which they belonged.

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 6

The July Revolution: civil action on the 29th of July – Monsieur Baude, Monsieur de Choiseul, Monsieur de Sémonville, Monsieur de Vitrolles, Monsieur Lafitte and Monsieur Thiers

Monsieur le Duc de Mortemart arrived at Saint-Cloud on Wednesday the 28th, at ten in the evening, to take up his post as Captain of the *Cent-Suisses*: he was unable to see the King until the following day. At eleven o'clock on the 29th he made a tentative approach to Charles X urging him to repeal the decrees; the King said: '*I do not wish to ride in a tumbril with my brother; I will not retreat a step.*' A little while later, he had retreated from a kingdom.

The Ministers arrived: Messieurs de Sémonville, d'Argout, and Vitrolles were there, Monsieur de Sémonville recounts that he had a long conversation with the King; and that he only managed to *weaken his resolution by stirring his heart in speaking of the risk to Madame la Dauphine*. He said: '*Tomorrow, at noon there will no longer be a King, a Dauphin, or a Duke of Bordeaux.*' And the King replied: '*You will surely give me till one.*' I don't believe a word of all that. Bragging is a fault of ours: question a Frenchman and listen to his tales, he will always have done everything. The Ministers went in to see the king behind Monsieur de Sémonville; the decrees were revoked, the government dissolved, and Monsieur de Mortemart was named President of the new Council.

In the capital, the Republican Party had at last found a home. Monsieur Baude (the gentlemen involved in the struggle at the offices of Le Temps), while traversing the streets, found the Hôtel de Ville only occupied by a couple of individuals, Monsieur Dubourg and Monsieur Zimmer. He immediately claimed to be the envoy of the *provisional government* which was about to be installed. He called together the employees of the Prefecture; he ordered them to set to work, as if Monsieur de Chabrol were present. When government has become automatic, the wheels are soon in motion; everyone hastened to secure the empty seats: who would be secretary general, who head of division, who would make himself agreeable, who would appoint staff and distribute the staff amongst his friends; there were those who slept there in order not to be wrong-footed, and to be ready to immediately seize any position that might become vacant. Monsieur Dubourg, nicknamed *the General*, and Monsieur Zimmer, were deemed to be leaders of the *military* section of the *provisional government*. Monsieur Baude, representing the *civil* side of this previously unknown government, made the decisions and issued the proclamations. However posters emanating from the Republican Party had been seen, spelling out the formation of an alternative government, comprising Messieurs de Lafayette, Gérard and Choiseul. It is difficult to associate the last name with the other two; as Monsieur Choiseul has himself protested. That aged Liberal, who, to stay alive, had held himself stiff as a corpse, as an *émigré* shipwrecked at Calais, found nothing left of his paternal home, on returning to France, but a box at the Opera.

At three in the evening, there was fresh confusion. An order of the day called a meeting of the Deputies, in Paris, at the Hôtel de Ville, to confer on the measures to be adopted. The mayors were to return to their mayoralties; they were also to send one of their assistants to the Hôtel de Ville in order to form a consultative commission. This order of the day was signed: *J. Baude*, for the *provisional government*, and Colonel Zimmer, *by order of General Dubourg*. This audacity carried out by the three, speaking in the name of a government which only existed as advertised by themselves at the street-corners, proves the

rare intelligence of the French during revolutions: men like these are clearly leaders destined to direct others. What misfortune that in delivering us from similar anarchy, Bonaparte snatched away our liberty!

The Deputies met again at Monsieur Lafitte's. Monsieur de Lafayette, resuming where he left off in 1789, declared that he would resume command of the National Guard as well. He was applauded, and went off to the Hôtel de Ville. The Deputies appointed a municipal commission composed of five members, Messieurs Casimir Périer, Lafitte, de Lobau, de Schonen, and Audry de Puyraveau. Monsieur Odilon Barrot was elected secretary of this commission, which installed itself at the Hôtel de Ville as had Monsieur de Lafayette. All this sat awkwardly with Monsieur Dubourg's provisional government. Monsieur Mauguin, sent on a mission to the *commission*, stayed there. The friend of Washington had the black flag that decorated the Hôtel de Ville, an idea of Monsieur Dubourg's, removed. At half past eight in the evening Monsieur de Sémonville, Monsieur d'Argout and Monsieur de Vitrolles arrived from Saint-Cloud. As soon as they had learned of the repeal of the decrees at Saint-Cloud, the recall of the former Ministers, and the nomination of Monsieur de Mortmart as the President of the Council, they had hastened to Paris. They presented themselves there as representatives of the King to the Municipal Commission. Monsieur Mauguin asked the Grand Referendary if he had written credentials; the Grand Referendary replied *that he had not thought to bring them*. The negotiation with the official commissioners ended there.

The meeting at Monsieur Lafitte's having learnt of what had gone on at Saint Cloud Monsieur Lafitte signed a pass for Monsieur de Mortemart, adding that the Deputies assembled at his house would wait for him until one in the morning. The noble Duke failing to arrive, the Deputies withdrew.

Monsieur Lafitte, with only Monsieur Thiers remaining, concerned himself with the Duc d'Orléans and the proclamations to be issued. Fifty years of revolution in France had provided practical people with skills in government re-organization, and found the theorists used to drawing up charters, and preparing the tackle and cradle by means of which governments are docked, and with which they are launched.

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 7

I write to the King at Saint-Cloud: his verbal response – The aristocratic corps – The pillage of the Missionaries' House on Rue d'Enfer

The day of the 29th, following my return to Paris, was not without occupation as far as I was concerned. My plans were stalled: I wished to act, but only wished to do so with orders, from the King's own hand, granting me the necessary powers to deal with the immediate authorities; to involve myself with it all and do nothing unsuitable. I had reasoned wisely, witness the affront suffered by Messieurs d'Argout, Sémonville and Vitrolles.

I then wrote to Charles X at Saint Cloud. Monsieur de Givré agreed to deliver my letter. I begged the King to tell me his wishes. Monsieur de Givré came back empty-handed. He had handed my letter to Monsieur le Duc de Duras, who had passed it to the King, who sent the reply that he had named Monsieur de Mortemart as his First Minister, and that he invited me to meet with him. Where to find the noble Duke? I searched for him on the evening of the 29th in vain.

Repulsed by Charles X, my thoughts turned to the Chamber of Peers; it could, as a sovereign court, invoke proceedings and judge disputes. If it was unsafe to convene in Paris, it was free to move elsewhere, even to the King's residence, and there declare a national arbitration process. It had some chance of success; there is always room for daring. After all, in succumbing, it would suffer a useful defeat where principles were concerned. But would I find a score of men in that Chamber prepared for self-sacrifice? Of those twenty, might there be four who agreed with me regarding public freedoms?

Aristocratic assemblies rule gloriously when they are a sovereign power, alone invested with its rights and machinery: they offer the strongest security; but in collaborative government, they lose their value, and are useless when major crises erupt...powerless against the King, they will not prevent despotism; powerless against the people, they will not stop anarchy. In public disturbances, they only buy their continued existence at the cost of perjury or subservience. Did the House of Lords save Charles I? Did it save Richard Cromwell, to whom it had sworn an oath? Did it save James II? Will it save the Hanoverian Princes now? Can it even save itself? A presumed aristocratic counterweight only upsets the balance and sooner or later is thrown out of the pan. An ancient and wealthy aristocracy accustomed to public business, has only one means of holding onto power when it is slipping away: that is, to pass from the Capitol to the Forum, and set itself at the head of the new movement, unless it thinks itself not strong enough to risk civil war.

While I was awaiting the return of Monsieur de Givré, I was busy defending my quarter of the city. The suburbanites and quarrymen of Montrouge flowed through the Barrière d'Enfer. The latter resembled those quarrymen of Montmartre who caused such great distress to Mademoiselle de Mornay as she was fleeing the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. Passing by the community of Missionaries situated on my street, they entered it: a score of priests were forced to save themselves: the den of fanatics was systematically pillaged, and their books and beds were burned in the street. No one spoke about this misfortune. Had they loaded themselves with whatever the propagandists had lost? I offered hospitality to seven or eight fugitives; they stayed hidden under my roof for several days. I obtained passports for them

through the intermediary of my neighbor, Monsieur Arago, and they went off to preach the word of God elsewhere. *‘The flight of saints has often been useful to nations, utilis populis fuga sanctorum.’*

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 8

#### The Chamber of Deputies – Monsieur de Mortemart

The Municipal Commission, established at the Hôtel de Ville, named Baron Louis as provisional Commissioner for Finance, Monsieur Baude to the Interior, Monsieur Mérilhou to Justice, Monsieur Chardel to Postal Services, Monsieur Marchal to Telegraphic Services, Monsieur Bavoux to the Police, and Monsieur de Laborde to the Prefecture of the Seine. Thus the *volunteer* provisional government was in reality destroyed by Monsieur Baude's promotion, which made him a member of the government. The shops re-opened; and public services renewed their course.

During the meeting at Monsieur Lafitte's it had been agreed that the Deputies would assemble at noon, in the Palais de la Chambre: there they found themselves sixty or so strong, presided over by Monsieur Lafitte. Monsieur Bérard announced that he had met Messieurs d'Argout, de Forbin-Janson and de Mortemart, who had gone to Monsieur Lafitte's, thinking to find the Deputies there; he had invited the gentlemen to follow him to the Chamber, but Monsieur le Duc de Mortemart, dropping with fatigue, had gone off to see Monsieur de Sémonville. Monsieur de Mortemart, according to Monsieur Bérard, had said that he had a free hand and that the King consented to everything.

In fact, Monsieur de Mortemart was carrying five decrees about with him: instead of communicating them to the Deputies immediately, his tiredness obliged him to return as far as the Luxembourg. At noon, he sent the decrees to Monsieur Sauvo; the latter replied that he could not publish them in the *Moniteur* without the authorization of the Chamber of Deputies or the Municipal Commission.

Monsieur Bérard being in the process, as I have said, of providing an explanation to the Chamber, a discussion arose as to whether to admit Monsieur de Mortemart or no. General Sébastiani insisted on the affirmative; Monsieur Mauguin declared that if Monsieur de Mortemart were present, he would demand that he be heard, but that matters were pressing and they could not await Monsieur de Mortemart's good pleasure.

They named five Commissioners charged with conferring with the Peers: these five Commissioners were Messieurs Augustin Périer, Sébastieni, Guizot, Benjamin Delessert and Hyde de Neuville.

But a little later the Comte de Sussy was introduced into the Elective Chamber. Monsieur de Mortemart had entrusted him with presenting the decrees to the Deputies. Addressing the Assembly he said: '*In the absence of Monsieur the Chancellor, a small number of Peers met at my house; Monsieur le Duc de Mortemart handed us this letter, addressed to Monsieur le General Gérard or Monsieur Casimir Périer. I ask your permission to read it.*' This is the letter; '*Monsieur, leaving Saint Cloud during the night, I have sought to meet with you in vain. Please tell me where I may find you. I beg you to give cognizance to the decrees of which I have been the bearer since yesterday.*'

Monsieur le Duc de Mortemart had left Saint Cloud during the night; he had had the decrees in his pocket for twelve to fifteen hours, since yesterday, according to his statement; he had not found General Gérard or Monsieur Casimir Périer: Monsieur de Mortemart had been very unlucky! Monsieur Bérard made the following observation on the letter as communicated:

*'I cannot prevent myself,' he said, 'from noting here a lack of frankness: Monsieur de Mortemarte, who arrived at Monsieur Lafitte's this morning while I was with him, told me formally that he was on his way here.'*

The five decrees were read out, the first repealing the decrees of the 25th of July, the second summoning the Chambers for the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, the third naming Monsieur de Mortemart Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the Council, the fourth granting General Gérard the War Ministry, the fifth granting Monsieur Casimir Périer the Finance Ministry. When I finally found Monsieur de Mortemart at the residence of the Grand Referendary, he assured me that he had been forced to halt at Monsieur de Sémonville's, because while returning on foot from Saint Cloud, he had been forced to make a detour and enter the Bois de Boulogne through a gap: his boot or shoe had blistered his heel. It is to be regretted that before producing the royal ordinances, Monsieur de Mortemart did not try to see the influential men inclined to the royal cause. The decrees suddenly emerged in front of Deputies who had not been forewarned, no one daring to declare himself. They attracted this lethal response from Benjamin Constant: *'We know in advance what the Chamber of Peers will say, that they accept the revocation of the previous decrees purely and simply. For my part, I can make no positive pronouncement on the question of the dynasty; I will only say that it would be all too convenient for a King to open fire on his subjects and then be quit of it by claiming: He did nothing.'*

Would Benjamin Constant, who could make *no positive pronouncement on the matter of the dynasty*, have ended his sentence in this manner if one had spoken to him beforehand in terms tailored to his talents and his own ambition? I feel sincerely sorry for a man of courage and honor like Monsieur de Mortemart, when I reflect that the Legitimacy was overthrown perhaps because the Minister entrusted with the King's powers failed to find two Deputies in Paris, and that, wearied with covering three leagues on foot, he had a blistered heel. The decree nominating him Ambassador to St. Petersburg has replaced the decrees given to Monsieur de Mortemart by his old master. Ah! Why did I refuse to become Louis-Philippe's Foreign Minister and pursue again my deeply-beloved Rome Embassy? But, alas! What would I have made of my *deeply-beloved* on the banks of the Tiber? I would always have thought her gazing at me in embarrassment.



## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 9

A trip through Paris – General Dubourg – A funeral ceremony beneath the Colonnades of the Louvre –  
The young men carry me to the Chamber of Peers

On the morning of the 30th, having received a note from the Grand Referendary inviting me to the meeting of Peers, at the Luxembourg, I wanted to discover the latest news beforehand. I went through the Rue d'Enfer, to the Place Saint-Michel, and the Rue Dauphine. There was still some excitement round the damaged barricades. I compared what I saw with the great revolutionary movement of 1789, and it seemed orderly and silent to me: the difference was obvious.

On the Pont-Neuf, the statue of Henri IV, held a tricolor flag, like a standard-bearer of the League. Gazing at the bronze King, someone in the crowd said: *'You would never have done anything so stupid, you old rascal.'* Groups of people were gathered on the Quai de l'École; in the distance I made out a general accompanied by two aides de camp all on horseback. I went in that direction. As I pushed through the crowd, I kept my eyes on the general: across his coat he wore a tricolor sash, and his hat was reversed and cocked to one side. He saw me in turn and called out: *'Heavens, it's the Vicomte!'* And I, with surprise, recognized Colonel or Captain Dubourg, my companion in Ghent, who on our way back to Paris had taken a succession of undefended towns in the name of Louis XVIII, and brought us half a sheep for our dinner in a hovel in Arnouville. He was the officer whom the newspapers had represented as an austere Republican soldier with a grey moustache, who had refused to serve under Imperial tyranny, and who was so poor they had been obliged to buy him a shabby uniform from the days of Laréveillère-Lepaux at an old clothes shop. And I for my part cried: *'Why! It's you! How come...'* He held out his arms, and shook hands with me over Flanquine's neck; a circle formed round us: *'My dear sir'*, said the military head of the Provision Government to me in a loud voice, pointing to the Louvre, *'there were twelve hundred of them in there: we peppered their behinds, and how they ran, how they ran!...'* Monsieur Dubourg's aides de camp burst into hearty laughter; the crowd laughed in unison; and the General spurred his nag that caracolled like a weary animal, and was followed by two other Rosinantes, slipping on the paving stones and ready to collapse between their riders' legs.

Thus, proudly ensconced, there parted from me that Diomedes of the Hôtel de Ville, moreover a man of courage and wit. I have seen men who, taking the events of 1830 seriously, blushed at this story, because it assailed their heroic credulity. I myself was ashamed to see the comic side of the most serious revolutions and how easily one can mock the people's good faith.

Monsieur Louis Blanc, in the first volume of his excellent *Histoire de dix ans*, published after the material I have just written, confirms my tale: *'A man,'* he says, *'in a General's uniform, of medium height, with an expressive face, was crossing the Marché des Innocents, followed by a considerable number of armed men. It was from Monsieur Évariste Dumoulin, journalist on the Constitutionnel, that this individual had received his uniform, taken from an old-clothes shop; and the epaulets he wore had been given to him by Perlet the actor: they came from the property-room of the Opéra-Comique. 'Who is that General?' everyone asked. And when those around him replied: 'It is General Dubourg', the crowd who had never heard his name before cried: 'Long live, General Dubourg!'* (I received a letter, on the 9th of January of this year, 1841, from Monsieur Dubourg: which contained the following: *'How I have longed to see you again since our meeting on the Quai du Louvre! How often I have wished to pour into your heart the*

*sorrows which lacerate my soul! How wretched it is to love one's country, honor, goodness, glory, with passion when one lives at such a time! ...Was I wrong, in 1830, to refuse to submit to what was being enacted? I clearly saw the odious future they were preparing for France; I explained how only evil could come from such fraudulent political structures: but no one understood me.'* On the 5th of July of that same year 1841, Monsieur Dubourg wrote to me again to send me the draft of a letter which he wrote to Messieurs de Martignac and de Caux urging them to admit me to the Council. I have not set down anything about Monsieur Dubourg, then, which is not of the highest verity. Note: Paris, 1841)

A little further on, another sight met my eyes: a ditch had been dug in front of the Colonnade of the Louvre; a priest, in surplice and stole, was praying beside the ditch: the dead were being laid to rest there. I took off my hat and made the sign of the cross. The crowd watched this ceremony, which would have meant nothing if religion had not appeared in it, in respectful silence. So many thoughts and memories came to mind that I remained in a state of immobility. Suddenly I felt the crowd around me; someone shouted: *Long live, the defender of Press freedom!* I had been recognized by the way my hair was dressed. Some young men immediately grasped me, saying: *'Where are you going, we'll carry you there?'* I had no idea what to answer; I thanked them: I struggled: I begged them to let me go. The time fixed for the meeting in the Chamber of Peers had not yet arrived. The young men continued shouting: *'Where are you going? Where are you going?'* I replied at random: *'All right then, to the Palais-Royal!'* I was immediately escorted there to shouts of: *'Long live, the Charter! Long live, the liberty of the Press! Long live, Chateaubriand!'* In the Cour des Fontaines, Monsieur Barba, the bookseller, emerged from his house to embrace me.

We arrived at the Palais-Royal; I was bundled into a café, and under its wooden arcade. I was dying from the heat. I reiterated my plea for remission of glory, with clasped hands: no result: the young people refused to let me go. There was a man in the crowd wearing a jacket with turned-up sleeves, with dirty hands, a sinister face, and burning eyes, the sort I had often seen at the start of the Revolution: He was continually trying to approach me, and the young men kept pushing him away. I learnt neither his name nor what he wished of me.

In the end I was forced to say I was going to the Chamber of Peers. We left the café; the cheering recommenced. In the courtyard of the Louvre various cries rang out: some shouted: *'To the Tuileries! To the Tuileries!'* others; *'Long live, the First Consul!'* apparently wishing to make me heir to the Republican, Bonaparte. Hyacinthe, who was with me, received his own share of handshakes and embraces. We crossed the Pont des Arts and went along the Rue de Seine. People rushed to see us go by; they crowded the windows. I found all these honors painful, as my arms were being pulled from their sockets. One of the young men pushing me on from behind suddenly put his head between my legs and lifted me onto his shoulders. Fresh cheering; they called out to the spectators in the street and at the windows: *'Hats off! Long live, the Charter'* and I replied: *'Yes Gentlemen, long live the Charter, but above all long live the King!'* My cry was not repeated, but it failed to provoke any anger. And that is how the game was lost! Everything could still have been arranged, but it was essential only to present popular men to the people: in revolutions, fame achieves more than an army.

I implored my young friends so feelingly that they at last set me down. In the Rue de Seine, opposite Monsieur Lenormant's, my publisher's, an upholsterer offered me an armchair to be carried in; I refused it, and arrived in triumph in the courtyard of the Luxembourg. My generous escort then left me having

uttered fresh cries of: '*Long live, the Charter! Long live, Chateaubriand!*' I was touched by the sentiments of these noble youths: I had shouted: '*Long live, the King!*' amongst them, as safely as if I had been in my own house; they knew my opinions; they themselves carried me to the Chamber of Peers where they supposed I was going to speak, while yet remaining loyal to my King; and yet it was the 30th of July, and we had just passed close by the ditch where citizens, killed by the bullets fired by Charles X's soldiers, were being buried.

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 10

#### The Meeting of Peers

The noise I left behind me contrasted with the silence which reigned in the vestibule of the Luxembourg Palace. That silence increased in the dark gallery which led to Monsieur de Sémonville's rooms. My presence disturbed the twenty five to thirty Peers who were gathered there: I stifled the mild effusions of fear, the tender consternation which they evinced. There I finally met with Monsieur de Mortemart. I told him that, in agreement with the King's wishes, I was ready to work with him. He replied, as I have already mentioned, that while returning he had blistered his heel: he went back to join the main assembly. He made known to us the decrees he had communicated to the Deputies via Monsieur de Sussy. Monsieur de Broglie declared he had just crossed Paris; that we were sitting on a volcano; that the employers could not restrain their workers; that if Charles X's name was even pronounced, they would cut all our throats, and would demolish the Luxembourg as they had the Bastille: *'It's true! It's true!'* the prudent ones murmured in a low voice nodding their heads. Monsieur de Caraman, who had been made a Duke, apparently because he had been Prince von Metternich's lackey, maintained heatedly that the decrees could not be acknowledged: *'Why not, Monsieur?'* I asked him. That calm question froze his eloquence.

The five Deputy Commissioners arrived. General Sébastiani began with his usual phrase: *'Gentlemen, it's a serious matter.'* Then he eulogized Monsieur le Duc de Mortemart's noble moderation; he spoke of the danger to Paris, pronounced a few words in praise of His Royal Highness Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans, and concluded with the impossibility of considering the decrees. I and Monsieur Hyde de Neuville were the only Peers of a contrary opinion. I was allowed to speak: *'Gentlemen, Monsieur le Duc de Broglie, has told us, that he has walked through the streets, and that he has seen hostile demonstrations everywhere: I also have traversed Paris, three thousand young people escorted me to the courtyard of this palace: you may have heard their shouts: are they, who thus saluted one of your colleagues, thirsting for your blood? They were shouting: 'Long live, the Charter!'* I replied: *'Long live, the King!'* They showed no anger and have deposited me amongst you safe and sound. Is this evidence of public opinion so threatening? I maintain, myself, that nothing is lost, that we can accept the decrees. The question is not one of considering whether there is any danger or no, but of keeping the oaths we have taken to that King from whom we derive our dignity and some among us their fortunes. His Majesty, in withdrawing his decrees and replacing his government, has done everything that he should: let us in turn do as we should. What? In the course of our whole lives a single day presents itself on which we are obliged to enter the field of battle, and shall we refuse to fight? Let us show France an example of loyalty and honor; let us prevent her falling into a state of anarchy, in which peace, her true interests and her liberty would be lost: danger vanishes when one dares to look it in the face.'

No one replied; they hastened to close the session. There was an impatience, amongst that gathering, to perjure themselves which made fear intrepid; all wished to preserve their scrap of life, as if time was not about to tear off our old skins, tomorrow, for which a sensible broker would not give a brass farthing.

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 11

The Republicans – The Orléanists – Monsieur Thiers is sent to Neuilly – Another gathering of Peers at the Grand Referendary's: the note reaches me too late

The three parties began to organize themselves and act against one another: the Deputies who supported a monarchy of the elder branch were the strongest legally; all who were for order rallied to their cause; but, morally, they were the weakest: they hesitated, they failed to take decisions: it became obvious, through the Court's tergiversation, that they would accept a usurpation rather than see themselves swallowed up by the Republicans.

The latter had a placard designed which read; *'France is free. She accords to the provisional government only the right to consult her, while waiting for her will to be expressed in fresh elections. No more royalty: Executive power entrusted to a temporary President: Direct or indirect involvement of all citizens in the election of Deputies: Freedom of religion.'*

This placard summarized the only valid element of Republican opinion; a fresh assembly of Deputies would have decided whether it was good or bad to cede to that wish, *no more royalty*; everyone could have made their case, and the election of a new government by a National Congress would have possessed the character of legality.

On another Republican poster of that same day, the 30th of July, you could read in large letters: *'No more Bourbons...That is the key to greatness, peace, public prosperity, liberty.'*

At length an address appeared from the members of the Municipal Commission composing a provisional government; it demanded: *'That no proclamation be issued naming a leader, while the very form of government was not yet determined; and that the provisional government would remain in operation until the wishes of the majority of the French people were known; all other measures being untimely and unacceptable.'*

This address emanating from members of a commission nominated by a large number of citizens, from the various districts of Paris, was signed by Messieurs Chevalier, as President, Trélat, Teste, Lepelletier, Guinard, Hingray, Cauchois-Lemaire, etc.

In this popular meeting, it was proposed, by acclamation, to turn the presidency of the Republic over to Monsieur de Lafayette; they relied on the principles that the representative Chamber of 1815 had proclaimed on dissolution. Various printers refused to publish these proclamations, saying they had been forbidden to do so by Monsieur le Duc de Broglie. The Republic brought to earth Charles X's throne; it feared the interdictions of Monsieur de Broglie, who was spineless.

I have told you that, on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> Monsieur Lafitte with Messieurs Thiers and Mignet, were all set to draw public attention to Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans. On the 30<sup>th</sup> appeared proclamations and addresses, the fruits of those discussions: *'Let us avoid a Republic,'* they said. Then came references to the feats of arms at Jemmapes and Valmy, and they assured us that Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans was no Capet, but a Valois.

However when Monsieur Thiers, sent by Monsieur Lafitte, rode to Neuilly with Monsieur Scheffer, His Royal Highness was not there. There was a flurry of words between Mademoiselle d'Orléans and Monsieur Thiers: it was agreed that they should write to Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans to persuade him to rally to the Revolution. Monsieur Thiers wrote a note to the Prince himself, and Madame Adélaïde promised to pre-empt his family in Paris. Orléanism had made progress, and from the evening of that very day the question of conferring the powers of Lieutenant-General on Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans was discussed.

Monsieur de Sussy, with the decrees from Saint-Cloud, had been even less well-received at the Hôtel de Ville than in the Chamber of Deputies. Furnished with a receipt by Monsieur de Lafayette, he sought out Monsieur de Mortemart who cried: '*You have done more than save my life; you have saved my honor.*'

The Municipal Commission issued a proclamation in which it declared that *the crimes of his reign* (Charles X) *were over*, and that *the people would have a government that owed its origin to itself* (the people): an ambiguous phrase that one could interpret as one wished. Messieurs Lafitte and Périer did not sign this act. Monsieur de Lafayette, somewhat late in his alarm at the idea of an Orléanist monarchy, sent Monsieur Odilon Barrot to the Chamber of Deputies to announce that the people, the authors of the July revolution, would not agree to it ending in a simple change of leader, and that the blood spilt merited some display of liberty. There was a question of a proclamation by the Deputies inviting His Royal Highness the Duke of Orléans to return to the capital; after communicating with the Hôtel de Ville, this idea of a proclamation was abandoned. They drew lots nevertheless to select a deputation of twelve members to go and offer the Lord of Neuilly the Lieutenant-Generalship which had not found its way into a proclamation.

In the evening, the Grand Referendary gathered the Peers together at his residence; his letter through negligence or political expediency reached me too late. I hastened to make the rendezvous; they opened the gate in the Allée de l'Observatoire for me; I crossed the Luxembourg Gardens; when I arrived at the Palace, I found no one there. I made my way back among the flowerbeds my eyes fixed on the moon. I thought with regret of the mountains and seas where she had appeared to me, the forests in whose summits she concealed herself in silence, with the aspect of one repeating to me Epicurus' maxim: '*Hide your life.*'

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 12

#### Saint-Cloud – A Scene: Monsieur le Dauphin and the Duke of Ragusa

I left the troops, on the 29th, falling back on Saint-Cloud. The bourgeois of Chaillot and Passy attacked them, killed a captain of carabineers, and two officers, and wounded a dozen soldiers. Lemotheux, the captain of the guard, was struck by a shot from a child whom he chose to spare. This captain had given in his resignation at the time when the decrees were published; but, seeing the fighting on the 27th, he rejoined his corps to share in his comrades' danger. Never, to the glory of France, has there been a nobler contest of opposing parties between liberty and honor.

The children, bold because they were unaware of danger, played a melancholy role during the *Three Days*: sheltering behind their youth, they fired at point-blank range on the officers who would have considered themselves dishonorable in firing back. Modern weapons place death at the disposal of the weakest of hands. Ugly and sickly monkeys, libertines before possessing the power to be so, cruel and perverse, those little heroes of the Three Days gave themselves over to assassination with all the abandon of innocence. Let us beware, through imprudent praise, of generating the emulation of evil. The children of Sparta went out hunting Helots.

Monsieur le Dauphin received the soldiers at the gate of the village of Boulogne, in the woods, then he returned to Saint-Cloud.

Saint-Cloud was guarded by four companies of Bodyguards. A battalion of students from Saint-Cyr had arrived: out of rivalry, and in contrast to the École Polytechnique, they had embraced the Royal cause. The exhausted troops, returning from a three day battle, wounded as they were and in a sorry state, spoke of nothing but their astonishment at the titled, gilded and sated domestics who ate at the King's table. No one thought of cutting the telegraph lines; couriers, travellers, mail-coaches and carriages passed freely on the roads, showing the tricolor flag which stirred the villages they traversed to insurrection. Attempts to bribe the soldiers to desert, by means of money and women, began. The proclamations of the Paris Commune were hawked here and there. The King and his Court did not wish to be persuaded that they were yet in danger. In order to show that they scorned the actions of a few mutinous bourgeois, and that there was no Revolution, they allowed everything to continue: the hand of God was visible in it all.

At nightfall on July 30th, about the same hour that the commission of Deputies was leaving for Neuilly, an aide, a major, announced to the troops that the decrees had been repealed. The soldiers shouted: '*Long live, the King!*' and went cheerfully to their quarters; but this announcement of the aide's, initiated by the Duke of Ragusa, had not been communicated to the Dauphin, who a great amateur disciplinarian, entered in a rage. The King said to the Marshal: '*The Dauphin is unhappy: go and explain to him.*'

The Marshal could not find the Dauphin at his residence, and waited for him in the billiard-room with the Duc de Guiche and the Duc de Ventadour, aides de camp to the Prince. The Dauphin re-appeared: seeing the Marshal he reddened to the eyes, crossed his ante-chamber with those giant strides of his, which were so singular, arrived at his salon and said to the Marshal: '*Enter!*' The door closed once more: a great row could be heard; the volume of his voice increased; the Duc de Ventadour anxiously opened the door; the Marshal emerged, pursued by the Dauphin, who called him doubly traitorous. '*Give me your sword! Give me your sword!*' and, throwing himself upon him, wrested away his sword. The Marshal's aide de camp,

Monsieur Delarue, wanted to intervene between him and the Dauphin, but was restrained by Monsieur de Montgascon; the Prince tried hard to break the Marshal's sword and cut his hands. He shouted: '*To me, Bodyguards! Arrest him!*' The Bodyguards rushed in; if the Marshal had not moved his head, their bayonets would have touched his face. The Duke of Ragusa was led to his apartment, under arrest.

The King resolved the matter as best he could, it being all the more regrettable in that the participants inspired no great interest. When Le Balafre's son killed Saint-Pol, Marshal of the League, that sword blow evidenced the pride and race of the Guise; but when Monsieur le Dauphin, a more powerful lord than a Prince of Lorraine, wished to cleave Marshal Marmont in two, what did that signify? If the Marshal had killed Monsieur le Dauphin, it would only have been a little strange. Caesar, the descendant of Venus, and Brutus, great-nephew of Junius, might pass in the street and no one would notice. Nothing is great these days, because nothing is noble.

That is how the monarchy's last hour was spent at Saint-Cloud: that pallid monarchy, disfigured and blood-stained, resembled the portrait d'Urfé paints for us of a great person dying: '*His eyes were wild and sunken; the lower jaw, clothed only by a little skin, seemed to have shrunk; the beard bristling, the complexion yellow, the gaze wandering, the breath labored. From his mouth there now no longer issued human words, but oracles.*'



## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 13

Neuilly – Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans – Le Raincy – The Prince arrives in Paris

Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans had the desire, throughout his life, that all high-born spirits have for power. That desire varies according to character: impetuous and aspiring, or weak and insidious; imprudent, overt, assertive in some, circumspect, hidden, bashful and humble in others: one, in order to rise, may indulge in every crime; another, to climb, may descend to any baseness. Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans belonged to the latter class of ambitious men. Examine this Prince's life, and he never says or does anything fully, always leaving the door open to evasion. During the Restoration, he flatters the Court and encourages liberal opinion; Neuilly is a rendezvous for dissatisfaction and malcontents. They sigh, they shake hands while raising their eyes to the heavens, but fail to pronounce a single word important enough to be mentioned in high places. If a member of the opposition dies, they add their carriage to the procession, but the carriage is empty; their livery is admitted at every door and grave. If, at the time of my disgrace at Court, I find myself on the same path as Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans at the Tuileries, and he has to salute me from the right-hand side in passing, I being on the left, he does it in such a manner as to turn his shoulder away. It will be noticed, and it is sufficient.

Did Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans know about the July decrees in advance? Was he told by someone who had the secret from Monsieur Ouvrard? What did he think? What were his hopes and fears? Had he conceived a plan? Did he urge Monsieur Lafitte to do what he did, or merely allow him to do so? From Louis-Philippe's character one would assume that he made no decisions, and his political timidity, shrouded in duplicity, waited on events as a spider waits for a fly to be caught in its web. He allowed the moment to conspire; he himself only conspired in his desires, which he probably feared.

Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans had two courses of action open to him: the first, and most honorable, was to hasten to Saint-Cloud, and interpose himself between Charles X and the nation, in order to save the Crown for the one, and liberty for the other; the second was to hurl himself onto the barricades, tricolor flag in hand, and place himself at the head of the popular movement. Philippe had a choice between being an honest man and a great man: he preferred to conjure away the King's crown and the people's liberty. A criminal, during the disturbance and misfortune of a fire, will quietly rob the burning palace of its most precious contents, without hearing the cries of a child surprised in its cradle by the flames.

Once the rich prize had been trapped, it was necessary to set the dogs on the quarry: then all the old corruptions of previous regimes appeared, those receivers of stolen goods, foul toads half-crushed, on which one has stamped a hundred times, and which live on, flattened though they may be. Yet these are the men they praise, whose cleverness is lauded! Milton thought otherwise when he wrote this passage from a sublime letter: *'Whatever the Deity may have bestowed upon me in other respects, he has certainly inspired me, if any ever were inspired, with a passion for the good and the beautiful...Hence, I feel an irresistible impulse to cultivate the friendship of him, who, despising the prejudiced and false conceptions of the vulgar, dares to think, to speak, and to be that which the highest wisdom has in every age taught to be the best. But if my disposition or my destiny were such that I could without any conflict or any toil emerge to the highest pitch of distinction and of praise; there would nevertheless be no prohibition, either human or divine, against my constantly cherishing and revering those, who have either obtained the same degree of glory, or are successfully laboring to obtain it.'*

Charles X's blinkered mind never knew where it was or who it was dealing with: they could have summoned Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans to Saint-Cloud, and it is probable that in the heat of the moment he would have obeyed; they could have removed him from Neuilly on the day of the decrees: they took neither course.

On being given the information Madame de Bondy carried to him at Neuilly on the night of Tuesday the 27th, Louis-Philippe rose at three in the morning, and withdrew to a location known only to his family. He had the dual fear of being affected by the insurrection in Paris or arrested by a Guards captain. So he went off to listen, in Raincy's solitude, to the sound of distant cannon fire from the fighting at the Louvre, as I, beneath a tree, had listened to that of the battle of Waterloo. The feelings which no doubt agitated the Prince would scarcely have resembled those which oppressed me in the Ghent countryside.

I have told you that, on the morning of the 30th of July, Monsieur Thiers failed to find the Duc d'Orléans at Neuilly; but Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans sent someone to look for His Royal Highness; Monsieur le Comte Anatole de Montesquiou was charged with the message. Arriving at Raincy, Monsieur de Montesquiou had endless trouble persuading Louis-Philippe to return to Neuilly to await the deputation from the Chamber of Deputies.

Finally, persuaded by the knight of honor to the Duchess of Orleans, Louis-Philippe entered his carriage. Monsieur de Montesquiou went in advance; at first he travelled quite swiftly; but when he looked behind he saw that His Royal Highness's calash had stopped and turned back on the way to Raincy. Monsieur de Montesquiou returned in haste, and implored his future majesty, who was hastening to hide himself in the wilderness like those illustrious Christians who once fled the burdensome dignity of the episcopate: the loyal servant won a last unhappy victory.

On the evening of the 30th, the deputation of a dozen members of the Chamber of Deputies, who were to offer the Lieutenant-General-ship of the Kingdom to the Prince, brought him a message at Neuilly. Louis-Philippe received the message through the park railing, read it by torchlight and instantly set out for Paris, accompanied by Messieurs de Berthois, Haymès and Oudart. He wore a tricolor cockade in his button-hole: he was off to steal an old crown from the stores.

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 14

A deputation of the Elective Chamber offers Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans the Lieutenant-General-ship of the Kingdom – He accepts – Republican efforts

On his arrival at the Palais-Royal, Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans sent his compliments to Monsieur de Lafayette.

The deputation of twelve Deputies presented itself at the Palais-Royal. They demanded that the Prince accept the Lieutenant-General-ship of the Kingdom; the reply was awkward: *'I have come among you to share your dangers....I need to reflect. I must consult with various people. The mood at Saint-Cloud is not hostile; the King's presence imposes duties on me.'* So Louis-Philippe replied. His words were repeated among the deputation as they waited: after retiring for half an hour, he re-appeared bearing a proclamation by virtue of which he accepted the functions of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, a proclamation ending with this declaration: *'From now on the Charter will be a reality.'*

Carried to the Elective Chamber, the proclamation was received with fifty-year old revolutionary enthusiasm: they responded with a further proclamation drafted by Monsieur Guizot. The Deputies returned to the Palais-Royal; the Prince was moved, accepted anew, and could not prevent himself bemoaning the deplorable circumstances which obliged him to become Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom.

The Republic, stunned by the blows directed towards it, sought to defend himself; but its real leader, General Lafayette, had effectively deserted it. He delighted in the clamor of adulation which surrounded him on all sides; he breathed in the perfume of revolution; he was charmed by the idea that he was France's arbiter, who could at will, with a tap of his foot, create republics or monarchies on earth; he liked to delude himself with that state of uncertainty which pleases minds that fear decisions, because instinct warns them that when matters are finished they will be nothing.

The other Republican leaders were doomed in advance in various ways: eulogies of the Terror, by reminding the French of 1793, made them recoil. The re-establishment of the National Guard simultaneously eliminated the principle and power of insurrection in the combatants of July. Monsieur de Lafayette did not realize that while day-dreaming of a Republic he had armed three million gendarmes against it.

Be that as it may, ashamed of being taken for dupes later, the young men attempted to resist. They retaliated by means of proclamations and posters displaying the proclamations and those of the Duc d'Orléans. They informed him that though the Deputies had demeaned themselves by begging him to accept the Lieutenant-General-ship of the Kingdom, the Chamber of Deputies, nominated under an aristocratic law, did not possess the right to declare the will of the people. They reminded Louis-Philippe that he was the son of Louis-Philippe-Joseph; that Louis-Philippe-Joseph was the son of Louis-Philippe I; that Louis-Philippe I was the son of Louis, who was the son of the Regent, Philippe II; that Philippe II was the son of Philippe I who was Louis XIV's brother: so that Louis-Philippe himself was a Bourbon and a Capet, not a Valois. Monsieur Lafitte nevertheless continued to regard him as being of the race of Charles IX and Henri III, and said: *'Thiers knows all that.'*

Later on, the Lointier Group proclaimed that the nation was armed to maintain its rights by force. The central committee of the twelfth district declared that the people had not been consulted on a form of Constitution; that the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Peers, holding their powers from Charles X, had fallen with him; that they could not, in consequence, represent the nation; that the twelfth arrondissement did not recognize this Lieutenant-General; that the provisional government remained in office, under the presidency of Lafayette, until a Constitution had been discussed and decided as the fundamental basis of government.

On the morning of the 30th, it was a question of proclaiming a Republic. A handful of determined men threatened to stab the Municipal Commission to death if they did not hang on to power. Should they not also attack the Chamber of Peers? They were furious at its audacity. The audacity of the Chamber of Peers! Certainly, that was the last outrage and last injustice it might have expected to experience from public opinion.

A plan was hatched: twenty of the most ardent young men would hide in ambush in a little street leading to the Quai de la Ferraille, and fire at Louis-Philippe, as he was returning from the Palais-Royal to the Maison de Ville. They were stopped from doing so when someone said: 'At the same time you will kill Laffite, Pajol and Benjamin Constant.' Finally they wished to abduct the Duke of Orléans and put him on board ship at Cherbourg: a strange meeting it would have been, if Charles X and Philippe had found themselves on the same vessel, in the same harbor, the one dispatched to a foreign shore by the bourgeois, the other by the Republicans!

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 15

#### Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans goes to the Hôtel de Ville

The Duke of Orléans having decided to have his title confirmed by the tribunes at the Hôtel de Ville, arrived in the courtyard of the Palais-Royal, surrounded by eighty-nine Deputies in their caps, rounded hats, morning dress, frock coats. The Royal candidate was mounted on a white horse; he was followed by gouty Monsieur Lafitte and lame Benjamin Constant in a sedan chair jolted along by two Savoyards. Messieurs Méchin and Viennet, covered in sweat and powder, marched along between the future monarch's white horse and the Deputies' equipage, quarrelling with the two crotchety ones about keeping the required distance between them. A semi-drunken drummer beat a *tattoo* at the head of the procession. Four ushers served as *lictors*. The most enthusiastic Deputies lowed: '*Long live, the Duke of Orléans!*' At the Palais-Royal these shouts met with some success; but the nearer they came to the Hôtel de Ville, the more the spectators either mocked them or fell silent. Philippe pranced about on his triumphal charger, and kept placing himself under Monsieur Lafitte's protection, receiving from him, along the way, words of reassurance. He smiled at General Gérard, made communicative gestures towards Monsieur Viennet and Monsieur Méchin, begging for the crown by taking a collection from the people with his hat which was adorned with a yard of tricolor ribbon, holding his hand out to whoever wished to place their charity in that hand as he passed by. The travelling monarchy arrived at the Place de Grève, where it was welcomed with cries of: '*Long live, the Republic!*'

When the royal subject for election entered the Hôtel de Ville, more threatening murmurs met the postulant: some zealous followers within who shouted his name welcomed the grasping ones. He entered the Throne Room; there the combatants and casualties from three days of fighting were crowded together: a general exclamation of: '*No more Bourbons! Long live, Lafayette!*' echoed from the ceiling of the room. The Prince seemed troubled. Monsieur Viennet read the Deputies' declaration in a loud voice on behalf of Monsieur Lafitte; it was heard in profound silence. The Duc d'Orléans pronounced a few words in support. Then Monsieur Dubourg said brusquely to Philippe: '*You are taking on a great responsibility. If you are ever found lacking, we are the men to remind you of it.*' And the future King replied movingly: '*Sir, I am an honest man.*' Monsieur de Lafayette, realizing the assembly's growing indecision, suddenly charged himself with renouncing the Presidency: he handed the Duc d'Orléans a tricolor flag, advanced onto the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville, and embraced the Prince in full view of the astonished crowd, while the latter waved the national flag. Lafayette's republican kiss made a king. A strange ending to the life of *the hero of Two Worlds!*

And then, *clip, clop!* Louis-Philippe's white horse and the Deputies' litter returned half-cursed, half-blessed, from the politic-making of the Place de Grève to the Palais-Marchand. '*On the very same day,*' says Monsieur Louis Blanc once more (the 31st of July), '*not far from the Hôtel de Ville, a boat moored to the steps of the Morgue, carrying a black flag, was taking on board the corpses laid out on stretchers. The corpses were stacked in layers and covered with straw; and the crowd, gathered along the parapets of the Seine, watched in silence.*'

Regarding the States of the League and the making of a king, Palma-Cayet cried: '*I beg you to imagine what response might have been made by that little gentleman Maître Matthieu Delaunay and by Monsieur Boucher, priest of Saint-Benoît, and others of that ilk, if anyone had told them they were to be*

*involved in installing a king of France at their own whim?....a true Frenchman has always scorned a method of electing kings that makes them at once masters and servants.'*

## BOOK XXXII

### CHAPTER 16

#### The Republicans at the Palais-Royal

Philippe was not yet at the end of his trials; he had yet more hands to shake, and more accolades to receive; he had yet to bestow many more kisses, salute the passers-by most humbly, return many times, at the caprice of the crowd, to sing the *Marseillaise* on the balcony of the Tuileries.

A number of Republicans met on the morning of the 31st at the offices of the *National*: when they were certain that the Duc d'Orléans had been appointed as Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, they wished to discover the opinions of this man destined to become king despite them. Messieurs *Bastide*, *Thomas*, *Joubert*, *Cavaignac*, *Marchais*, *Degousée* and *Guinard* were led to the Palais-Royal by Monsieur *Thiers*: The prince started by saying some very fine things regarding liberty: *'You are not king yet'*, Bastide replied *'listen to the truth; you will have no lack of flatterers soon.'* *'Your father'*, added Cavaignac *'was a regicide like mine; that distinguishes you from the rest somewhat.'* Mutual congratulations regarding regicide, but Philippe nevertheless made this judicious remark, that there are things one must retain the memory of in order not to repeat them.

Republicans who had not been at the National meeting entered. *Monsieur Trélat* said to Philippe: *'The people are your master. Your appointment is provisional; the people must express their will: will you consult them, yes or no?'*

Monsieur Thiers tapped Monsieur Thomas on the shoulder and interrupted this dangerous speech: *'Monseigneur, have we not a fine colonel here?'* – *'Indeed'*, Louis Philippe replied. *'What was that he said,'* they cried. *'Does he take us for a crew to be bought?'* and a confused conflict of words arose on all sides: *'It's like the tower of Babel! And they call him a citizen king! It's a Republic? Then govern with Republicans!'* And there was Monsieur Thiers exclaiming: *'I've made a fine job of being ambassador.'*

Then Monsieur de Lafayette arrived at the Palais-Royal: the citizen had to suffer suffocation in his sovereign's embrace. The whole palace swooned with delight.

There were jackets in the post of honor, caps in the salons, workmen's blouses at table with the Princes and Princesses; in the council chamber were chairs and not armchairs; anyone who wished could speak; Louis-Philippe, seated between Monsieur de Lafayette and Monsieur Lafitte, an arm round each man's shoulder, overflowed with equality and good cheer.

I would have liked to add more gravity to my description of these scenes which initiated a grand revolution, or to speak more correctly, these scenes by which a transformation of society was expedited; but I witnessed them; the Deputies who were actors in them could not hide a measure of confusion, in recounting the way in which, on the 31st of July, they went about making – a king.

Objections were made to *Henri IV*, a non-Catholic, which did not debase him and which even accorded with the elevation of the throne: he was told: *'that Louis had not been canonized at Geneva but in Rome; that if the King would not become a Catholic, he could not hold the supreme place among Christian*

*kings; that it would not be well if the King prayed in one manner and his people in another; that the king could not be crowned at Rheims and could not be interred in Saint-Denis if he were not a Catholic.'*

What objection was made to Philippe before allowing him to pass the final test? The objection was made that he was not enough of a *patriot*.

Now that the revolution is complete, it is regarded as an offence if one dares to recall what went on at the start; there is a fear of weakening the solidity of the position that has been won, and whoever fails to discover the gravity of the accomplished reality in its initial beginnings is a detractor.

When a dove descended to bring Clovis the sacred oil, when long-haired kings were elevated on shields, when Saint Louis trembled with anticipatory virtue at his coronation on swearing to use his authority purely for the glory of God, and his people's well-being, when Henri IV, on his entry into Paris, went to prostrate himself at Notre Dame, where a handsome child was seen, or thought to have been seen, at his right hand protecting him, who was taken to be his guardian angel, I consider the crown was sacred; the Oriflamme remained in the tabernacle of heaven. But since a sovereign, in a public place, his hair trimmed, his hands behind his back, has bowed his head beneath the blade to the sound of a drum; since another sovereign, surrounded by the mob, has gone to beg votes for his *election*, to the sound of the same drum, in another public place, who can retain the least illusion about the Crown? Who believes that this royalty, bruised and soiled can still impose itself on society? Who, feeling their heart still beat, could sip the power in that chalice of shame and disgust, that Philippe has emptied at one gulp, without vomiting? European monarchy would have continued to survive if France had remained the mother of monarchy, daughter of a saint and a great man; but the fecund seed is scattered: nothing of it all will be re-born.

**End of Book XXXII**



## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 1

The King leaves Saint-Cloud –Madame la Dauphine arrives at the Trianon – The diplomatic corps

You have just seen Royalty on the Place de Grève, powdered and breathing hard, marching in the midst of its arrogant supporters; now watch Royalty at Rheims withdrawing at a measured pace in the midst of its chaplains and guards, walking with the correctness prescribed by etiquette, hearing not one disrespectful word, and revered even by those who detest it. The soldier who considered it of little worth, was prepared to die for it; the white banner, draped over his coffin before being folded forever, said to the breeze: Salute me: I was at Ivry; I saw Turenne die; the English knew me at Fontenoy; I fought for freedom's victory under Washington; I freed Greece, and I still wave above the walls of Algiers!

On the 31<sup>st</sup> at daybreak, at the very hour when the Duc d'Orléans, after arriving in Paris, was preparing to accept the Lieutenant-Generalship, the servants from Saint-Cloud presented themselves at the camp near the Pont de Sèvres, declaring that they had been dismissed, and that the King had left at three-thirty in the morning. The soldiers were anxious, but grew calmer on seeing the Dauphin; he appeared on horseback, as if to inspire them with one of those speeches that leads the French to death or victory; he halted in front of the line, stammered a few phrases, turned abruptly and re-entered the Château. It was not courage that failed him, but words. The wretched education that the princes of the elder branch received, since Louis XIV, rendered them incapable of maintaining an argument, expressing themselves like others, or mixing with the rest of mankind.

Meanwhile the heights of Sèvres and the terraces of Bellevue were crowned with representatives of the people: there were several exchanges of fire. The captain who commanded the vanguard at the Pont du Sèvres went over to the enemy: he led a party of soldiers and a piece of cannon to a group gathered on the *Point du Jour* road. Then the Parisians and the Guards agreed that there would be no hostilities until the evacuation of Saint-Cloud and Sèvres had been achieved. The withdrawal commenced; the Swiss were surrounded by the citizens of Sèvres, and threw down their arms, though they were relieved almost immediately by the Lancers, the Lieutenant-Colonel of whom was wounded. The troops passed through Versailles, where the National Guard had been positioned since the previous day along with La Rochejaquelein's Grenadiers, the former under the tricolor cockade, the latter under the white. Madame la Dauphine arrived from Vichy and rejoined the Royal Family at Trianon, once Marie-Antoinette's favorite place. At Trianon, Monsieur de Polignac parted from his master.

It has been said that Madame la Dauphine was opposed to the decrees: the only means of judging such matters is to consider them in their essentials; the people will always be for freedom, princes inclined towards power. It is neither a crime nor a merit in them; it is their nature. Madame la Dauphine would perhaps have desired the decrees to have appeared at a more opportune moment, so that better precautions could have been taken to ensure their success; but in truth they pleased her and ought to have done so. Madame la Duchesse de Berry was delighted by them. Those two Princesses thought that unfettered royalty was at last free of the shackles that representative government attaches to the feet of kings.

It is astonishing that there was no sign of the diplomatic corps during these events of July, they who were consulted far too much by the Court, and were involved in all our affairs. There is twice a reference to foreign ambassadors during the disturbances. A man was arrested at the gates, and the package he was

carrying was sent to the Hotel de Ville: it was a dispatch from Monsieur de Loevenhielm to the King of Sweden. Monsieur Baude had this dispatch returned to the Swedish legation without opening it. Lord Stuart's correspondence fell into the hands of the popular leaders, it was also returned without being opened, which amazed London. Lord Stuart, like his fellow countrymen, adored disorder abroad: his diplomacy was that of a *policeman*, his dispatches were police *reports*. He liked me when I was Minister, because I dealt with him without any fuss, and because my door was always open; he entered the residence at any hour in his boots, muddy and dressed like a thief, after chasing about the boulevards and through houses of ladies whom he rewarded badly, who called him *Stuart*.

I had conceived a new way of conducting diplomacy: having nothing to hide, I spoke out loud; I would have shown my dispatches to the first-comer, because I had no project for the glory of France that I was not determined to accomplish despite all opposition.

I told Sir Charles Stuart a hundred times, with a smile, yet speaking seriously: *'Don't pick a quarrel with me. If you throw down your glove, I shall pick it up. France has never made war on you with a proper understanding of your circumstances; that is why you have beaten us; but don't rely on it.'* (That is pretty much what I wrote to Mr. Canning in 1823. See Le Congrès de Vérone.)

Lord Stuart regarded our *July disturbances* therefore in a good-natured way while delighting in our misery; but the other members of the diplomatic corps, inimical to the popular cause, had more or less urged Charles X to issue the decrees, and yet, when they appeared, they did nothing to rescue the monarchy; so that if Monsieur Pozzo di Borgo showed anxiety about a *Coup d'état* it was not on behalf of the king or the people.

Two things are certain:

Firstly, the July Revolution acted against the treaties of the Quadruple Alliance: Bourbon France was party to that alliance: the Bourbons could not be violently dispossessed without placing Europe's new political rule in danger.

Secondly, in a monarchy, foreign legations are not accredited to the *government*; but to the monarch. The strict duty of those legations was therefore to gather around Charles X, and follow him wherever he went on French soil.

Is it not strange that the only ambassador who took account of this idea represented Bernadotte, a king who did not belong to an ancient royal family? Monsieur de Loevenhielm converted Baron Werther to his opinion, while Monsieur Pozzo di Borgo opposed a step which would have taxed letters of credit and which demanded they be honored.

If the diplomatic corps had gone to Saint-Cloud, Charles X's position would have been different: the partisans of the Legitimacy would firstly have gained the power in the Elective Chamber which they lacked; the fear of possible war had alarmed the industrialists; the idea of keeping the peace while protecting Henri V had brought a considerable mass of people over to the Royal infant's side.

Monsieur Pozzo di Borgo held back in order not to compromise his funds on the Bourse or with the banks, and especially not to expose his position. He had gambled at five per cent on the death of the Capetian legitimacy, a death which will communicate itself to other living kings. People will be sure, in

this age of ours, to attempt, as usual, to pass off this irreparable crime of personal interest as a profound scheme.

Ambassadors who are left at the same Court for too long take on the manners of the country they reside in: charmed to be living in the midst of honors, failing to see things as they are, they fear to let slip in their dispatches any reality that might lead to an alteration in their status. It is another thing, in effect, to be Messieurs Apponyi, Werther, and Pozzo in Vienna, Berlin and St Petersburg, than to be their Excellencies the Ambassadors to the Court of France. It is said that Monsieur Pozzo had a grudge against Louis XVIII and Charles X, regarding the blue sash and a peerage. They were wrong not to satisfy his wishes; he had rendered the Bourbons good service, through hatred of Bonaparte his fellow-countryman. But if at Ghent he had decided the issue of the throne by urging the rapid departure of Louis XVIII for Paris, he can pride himself on having contributed, by preventing the diplomatic corps from doing its duty during those July days, to the toppling from Charles X's head of the crown, which he had helped to place on that of Charles' brother.

I have thought for a long time that the diplomatic corps born in an age subject to another order of society is no longer in tune with the new order: public government, and swift communication means that nowadays cabinets are able to handle affairs directly or with no other intermediary than the consular agents, whose numbers should be increased and whose lot should be improved: since Europe is now industrialized. Titled spies, with exorbitant pretensions, who interfere in everything in order to acquire an importance they lack, only serve to trouble governments to which they are accredited, and nourish their masters' illusions. Charles X was wrong, for his part, in not inviting the diplomatic corps to attend his Court; but what he saw resembled a dream to him; he stumbled from astonishment to astonishment. It is thus that he failed to order Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans to join him; since, believing only in dangers from the Republican side, the risk of usurpation never entered his head.

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 2

#### Rambouillet

Charles X left in the evening for Rambouillet with the Princesses and Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux. Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans' new role gave birth in the King's mind to the first thoughts of abdication. Monsieur le Dauphin, always in the rear-guard, but never mixing with the soldiers, had what remained of the food and wine distributed to them at Trianon.

At eight-fifteen in the evening, the various corps began marching. There the loyalty of the 5th Light Infantry expired. Instead of following the route, they returned to Paris: their flag was taken to Charles X who refused to accept it, as he had refused to accept that of the 50th.

The brigades were in confusion, their sections intermingled; the cavalry overtook the infantry and made a separate halt. At midnight, as the 31st expired, they arrived at Trappes. The Dauphin slept in a house behind the village.

On the next day, the 1st of August, he left for Rambouillet leaving the troops bivouacked at Trappes. They struck camp at eleven. Some soldiers, having gone to buy bread in the hamlets, were massacred.

Arriving at Rambouillet, the army was billeted around the Château.

During the night of the 1st, three regiments of heavy cavalry set out for their former garrisons. They thought that General Bordesoulle, commanding the Guards heavy cavalry, had surrendered at Versailles. The 2nd Grenadiers also left on the morning of the 2nd of August, after sending their pennants to the King. The Dauphin encountered these deserting grenadiers; they formed line in order to render honors to the Prince and then continued on their way. A strange mixture of disloyalty and ritual! In that Three Day revolution no one was passionate; everyone acted according to his own idea of right or duty: the right won, the duty fulfilled, no enmity remained and likewise no affection, some fearing lest rights carry them too far, others lest duty exceed its boundaries. Perhaps there has never been a time, and will never be another, in which a people has halted before achieving victory, and soldiers who have defended a king, as long as he seemed willing to resist, have returned their standards to him before abandoning him.

The decrees had freed the nation of its oath; this retreat, on the field of battle, freed the grenadier of his flag.

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 3

Opening of the Session of the 3rd of August – A letter from Charles X to Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans

With Charles X withdrawing, and the Republicans falling back, nothing prevented the elected monarchy from advancing. The provinces, ever like sheep, and the slaves of Paris, at every twitch of the telegraph and every tricolor flag waving from the summit of a carriage, shouted: '*Long live, Philippe!*' or: '*Long live, the Revolution!*'

For the opening of the Session, fixed for the 3rd of August, the Peers moved to the Chamber of Deputies: I went along, since everything was still provisional. There another act of the melodrama was played out: the throne was empty and the anti-King sat to one side. Someone had mentioned a Chancellor opening a session of the English Parliament by proxy, in the sovereign's absence.

Philippe spoke of the dire necessity of his accepting the Lieutenant-Generalship to protect us all, of the revision of Article 14 of the Charter, of freedom which he, Philippe, bore in his heart and which he would extend to us, and of peace in Europe. Tricks performed with language, and with the constitution, which had been repeated at each phase of our history for the previous half century. But attention was drawn to this declaration of the Prince:

*'Peers and Deputies, Gentlemen,*

*As soon as the two Chambers have been constituted, I will bring forward for your attention the Act of Abdication of His Majesty King Charles X. By this same act, Louis-Antoine de France, Dauphin, also renounces his rights. This act was placed in my hands yesterday, the 2nd of August, at eleven o'clock at night. I ordered it to be deposited in the archives of the Chamber of Peers this morning, and have had it inserted in the *Moniteur's* official announcements.'*

By a miserable ruse, and with cowardly reticence, the Duc d'Orléans here suppressed the name of Henri V, in whose favor the two kings had abdicated. If every citizen of France has been individually consulted at that time, it is probable that the majority would have pronounced in favor of Henri V; some republicans would even have accepted him, while appointing Lafayette as his mentor. The seed of the Legitimacy remaining in France, and the two old kings departing to end their days in Rome, any difficulties surrounding the usurpation, and rendering it suspect to various elements, would have ceased to exist. The adoption of the junior Bourbon line was not only a risk, it was a political nonsense; modern France is Republican; it does not want a king, at least not a king of the ancient race. Let a few years go by, and we shall see what becomes of our freedoms and what that peace constitutes in which the world is to rejoice. If one judges from the newly elected leader's conduct, given what one knows of his character, it is likely that this Prince will see the way to preserve his monarchy only by oppression at home, and fawning abroad. (*Was I wrong?* Note: Paris, 1840)

Louis-Philippe's real crime was not in accepting the crown (an act of ambition of which there are thousands of examples, and which merely attacked the political institutions); his true offence was in being a faithless master, in despoiling *the infant and the orphan*, an offence against which the Scripture cannot rail enough: now, *moral justice* (which is called fatality or Providence, and which I call the inevitable consequence of evil) never fails to punish infractions of the *moral law*.

Philippe, his government, all that realm of impossible and contradictory things, perished, in a timescale more or less retarded by chance events, by internal and external complexities of interest, by the apathy and corruption of individuals, and by the superficiality, indifference and evasion of men of influence; but, whatever the actual duration of the regime, it will not be long enough for the Orléans branch to become deep-rooted.

Charles X, learning of the progress of the revolution, possessing nothing in his own character or experience capable of arresting that progress, thought to ward off the blow executed against his line by abdicating with his son, as Philippe announced to the Deputies. On the 1st of August he had written a note approving the opening of the session, and counting on his cousin the Duc d'Orléans' sincere affection for him, he named him, for his part, Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom. He went further on the 2nd, asking no more than to embark on board ship, and asking for commissioners to escort him as far as Cherbourg. This suggestion was not well received initially by the military. Bonaparte had also had commissioners as guards, on the first occasion Russians, on the second Frenchmen; but he had not asked for them.

Here is Charles X's letter:

*'Rambouillet, this 2nd of August 1830*

*Dear cousin, I am far too deeply grieved by the ills which afflict or might threaten my nation not to seek means of preventing them. I have therefore resolved to abdicate the crown in favor of my grandson the Duc de Bordeaux.*

*The Dauphin, who shares my sentiments, also renounces his rights in favor of his nephew.*

*You will then, in your role as Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, proclaim the advent of Henri V to the crown. Moreover you will take all measures within your remit to organize the government during the new king's minority. Here I limit myself to making these dispositions known; as a means of avoiding further ills.*

*You will communicate my intentions to the diplomatic corps, and let me know at the earliest moment of the proclamation by which my grandson is recognized as King under the name of Henri V...*

*I renew to you, dear cousin, my assurance of the sentiments with which I remain your affectionate cousin.*

*CHARLES.'*

If Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans had been capable of emotion, or remorse, would not that phrase, *your affectionate cousin*, have stirred his heart? At Rambouillet they had so little faith in the efficacy of abdication, that they readied the young prince for the voyage: the tricolor cockade, his aegis, had already been prepared by the hands of those who had been most eager for the decrees. Suppose that Madame la Duchesse de Berry, leaving swiftly with her son, had been presented to the Chamber of Deputies at the moment when Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans was delivering the opening speech, then a chance would have remained; a slim chance, but at least, in the event of disaster, the child lost to Heaven would not have dragged out wretched days on a foreign soil!

My advice, my wishes, and my cries, were powerless; in vain I urged Marie-Caroline to act: Bayard's mother, preparing to leave the paternal castle, 'wept' says the Loyal Servant. *'The good gentlewoman left by the rear entrance to the tower and came to her son to whom she spoke these words: "Pierre, my dear, be gentle and courteous while subduing all pride; be humble and helpful to all people; be faithful in word and deed; aid the poor widow and orphan, and God will protect you..." Then the good lady took from her sleeve a small purse in which there were only six gold crowns and a piece of silver which she gave to her son.'*

The Chevalier '*sans peur et sans reproche*' left with his six gold crowns in a little purse to become the bravest and most renowned of knights. Henri, who may have lacked even the six gold crowns, had other struggles to contend with; he had to fight against misfortune, a difficult champion to unhorse. Let us glorify mothers who teach such fine and tender lessons to their sons! Be blessed then, my mother, from whom I derive whatever has brought honor and discipline to my life.

Forgive all these recollections; but perhaps my tyrant memory, by mingling past with present, robs the latter of some of its wretchedness.

The three Commissioners deputed to escort Charles X were Messieurs de Schonen, Odilon Barrot, and Marshal Maison. Recalled by military summons, they took the road to Paris. A popular procession carried them towards Rambouillet.

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 4

#### The crowd departs for Rambouillet – The flight of the King - Reflections

On the evening of the 2nd of August, in Paris, a rumor spread that Charles X refused to leave Rambouillet until his grandson had been recognized as king. A crowd assembled on the morning of the 3rd on the Champs-Élysées, shouting: *'To Rambouillet! To Rambouillet! No Bourbon must survive.'* Wealthy men mingled among them, but come the moment they watched the *rabble* depart, with General Pajol, who had Colonel Jacqueminot as his chief-of-staff, at its head. The Commissioners on returning, had encountered the Colonel's scouts, retraced their steps and were then escorted to Rambouillet. The King then questioned them about the forces of insurgency, before he withdrew and summoned Maison, who owed him his fortune and his Marshal's baton: *'Maison, I ask you to tell me on your honor, and on your military oath, whether what the Commissioners are saying is true or no?'* The Marshal replied: *'You have not been told the half of it.'*

At Rambouillet, on the 3rd of August, were three thousand five hundred men of the Foot Guards, and four regiments of Light Cavalry, in twenty squadrons, comprising two thousand men. The military headquarters, corps of Guards, etc., cavalry and infantry, amounted to thirteen hundred men; in total six thousand eight hundred men, and seven mounted batteries composed of forty-two pieces of cannon. At ten in the evening they sounded the signal to mount; the whole camp set out on the road to Maintenon, Charles X and his family travelling in the center of the fatal procession dimly lit by the veiled moon.

Whom did they retreat before: before a virtually unarmed crowd which arrived from Versailles and Saint-Cloud in omnibuses, four-wheeled cabs, and little carriages. General Pajol had thought himself doomed when he was forced to take command of this host, which, after all, comprised no more than fifteen thousand individuals, including those arriving from Rouen. Half of the mob was left behind on the way. A few excited, brave and generous young men, in this confused crowd, would have been killed; the rest would probably have dispersed. In the fields of Rambouillet, in open country, they would have had to face infantry and artillery fire; a victory, according to all the evidence, would have been achieved. Negotiations could have been established between the people, victorious in Paris, and the King, victorious at Rambouillet.

What! Amongst all those officers, was there not one resolute enough to seize command in the name of Henri V? For, after all, neither Charles X nor the Dauphin was now king!

If they did not wish to fight, why did they not retreat to Chartres? There they would have been well out of reach of the Paris mob: better still to Tours, relying on the Legitimist provinces. With Charles X still in France, the majority of the army would have remained loyal. The camps at Boulogne and Lunéville would have risen and marched to his aid. My nephew, Comte Louis, was in command of a regiment, the 4th Chasseurs, which had not disbanded on news of the retreat from Rambouillet. Monsieur de Chateaubriand was reduced to escorting the monarch on a *pony* to his place of embarkation. If, from one of those towns, maintaining the initiative, Charles X had convoked the two Chambers, more than half of each Chamber would have obeyed. Casimir Périer, General Sébastiani and a hundred others would have attended, being opposed to the tricolor cockade; they dreaded the dangers of a popular revolution: what am I saying? The Lieutenant General of the Kingdom, summoned by the King, and not realizing the battle was won, would



have been stripped of his followers and would have obeyed the Royal command. The diplomatic corps, which failed in its duty, would then have carried it out by rallying to the monarch. The Republic, instituted in Paris in the midst of total disorder, would not have lasted a month, faced by a proper constitutional government, established elsewhere. Never was a game lost so easily, and when it is lost in that way, there is no opportunity for revenge: talk then to citizens about freedom and about honor to soldiers, after the July decrees and the retreat from Saint-Cloud!

Perhaps a time will come, when a new social order will have replaced existing society, when war will seem a monstrous absurdity, when principles will no longer be compromised; but we are not there yet. Among armed struggles, there are philanthropists who distinguish different kinds, and are ready to find civil war alone evil: *'Compatriots who kill each other, brothers, fathers, sons who face one another!'* Without doubt, all that is very sad; yet a nation is often refreshed and reinvigorated by internal discord. No country has vanished through civil war, often they have vanished in wars with other countries. Look at Italy at the time of its divisions, and look at her today. It is deplorable to be forced to ravage your neighbor's property, to see your hearth blood-drenched by that neighbor; but, frankly, is it any more humane to massacre a family of German peasants whom you do not know, who have never quarreled with you in any way, whom you rob, whom you kill without remorse, whose wives and daughters you dishonour with an easy conscience, merely because *that is war*? Whatever they say, civil war is less unjust, less repulsive, and more natural than war abroad, when the latter is not undertaken to save the nation's independence. At least civil wars are founded on individual grievances, on acknowledged and recognized aversions; they are duels with seconds, or at least the adversaries know why they have a sword in their hand. If the passions do not justify evil, they excuse them, they explain them, and they allow one to understand why it exists. How can one justify a foreign war? Nations are at each other's throats often because some king is bored, because some ambitious person wishes to rise, because a minister seeks to supplant a rival. It is time to render justice to these old commonplaces of sensibility, more fitting for poets than historians. Thucydides, Caesar, Livy content themselves with a word of mourning then pass on.

Civil war, despite its calamities, has only one real danger: that is if the factions have recourse to a foreign power, or the foreign power, profiting from national division, attacks the nation; conquest may be the result of such a situation. Great Britain, Spain, Ottoman Greece, in our time, and Poland offer examples that should not be forgotten. However, during the League, the two parties called for aid from the Spanish, the English, the Italians, and the Germans, these counter-balancing and not disturbing the equilibrium that the French armies maintained between themselves.

Charles X was wrong to use bayonets to maintain the decrees; his ministers could not justify, whether obeying orders or not, the shedding of the people's and the soldiers' blood, without any hatred dividing them, just as Terrorists willingly recreated the system of the Terror when there was no longer a Terror. But Charles X was also wrong not to accept a fight when, after conceding on all points, the fight was brought to him. He had no right, having set the crown on his grandson's forehead, to say to that new Joas: *'I have placed you on the throne to train you for exile, so that unfortunate, exiled, you can bear the weight of my years, my proscription and my scepter.'* He should not have at the same moment granted Henri V a crown and robbed him of France. In making him King, he had marked him to die on this soil where the dust of Saint-Louis and Henri IV is mingled.

Well, after this blood-letting, I have recovered my senses, and in these things I merely see the completion of human destiny. The Court, triumphant by means of force, would have destroyed public freedom; it would have been erased just the same one day; but it would have retarded the development of society by many years; all that comprised the monarchy writ large would have been opposed by the re-established congregation. In the final result, events have followed the drift of civilization. God made powerful men suit his secret purposes: he gave them faults which destroyed them when they needed to be destroyed, because he did not wish qualities badly applied by an erring mind to oppose the decrees of Providence.

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 5

The Palais-Royal – Conversations – A last political temptation – Monsieur de Saint-Aulaire

The Royal family, by leaving, reduced me to my own resources. I no longer thought of what I might be called upon to say in the Chamber of Peers. To write was impossible: if an attack had come from the enemies of the crown; if Charles X had been overthrown by a conspiracy from outside, I would have picked up my pen, and having been left my independence of thought, I would have worked hard to rally a large party to the remnants of the monarchy; but the attack came from the crown itself; the ministers had violated the twin principles of liberty, they had made royalty break its oath, not intentionally doubtless, but in fact; by that they had also stolen my power. What could I dare to say in favor of the decrees? How could I still boast of the sincerity, candor, and chivalry of the Legitimacy? How could I claim that they were the best guarantee of our interests, our laws, and our freedom? A champion of the ancient royalty, that royalty had robbed me of my weapons, and left me naked to my enemies.

So I was quite surprised when, reduced to this state of weakness, I found myself sought after by the new royalty. Charles X had disdained my services; Philippe made an effort to attach me to him. First of all Monsieur Arago spoke to me in an elevated and forceful manner on behalf of Madame Adélaïde; then Comte Anatole de Montesquiou came to Madame Récamier's one morning and found me there. He told me that Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans and Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans would be charmed to see me, if I would go to the Palais-Royal. At that time they were occupied with the declaration which would transform the Lieutenant-Generalship of the Kingdom into a monarchy. Perhaps, before I could make any pronouncements, His Royal Highness may have judged it opportune to try and weaken my opposition. He may also have thought I might consider myself freed by the flight of the three kings.

Monsieur de Montesquiou's overtures surprised me. Yet I did not reject them, since, without flattering myself regarding any chance of success, I thought I might be able to communicate some honest truth. I went to the Palais-Royal with the future queen's Knight of Honor. Escorted to the entrance giving on the Rue de Valois, I found Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans and Madame Adélaïde in their little apartment. I had been honored by being presented to them previously. Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans made me sit beside her, and immediately said; *'Ah! Monsieur de Chateaubriand, we are most unfortunate. If all the parties would unite, perhaps they might yet save the situation! What do you think?'*

*'– Madame,'* I replied, *'nothing is so straightforward: Charles X and Monsieur le Dauphin have abdicated: Henri is now King; Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans is Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom: let him act as Regent during Henri V's minority and all is settled.'*

*'– But, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, the people are agitating; we will descend into anarchy.'*

*'– Madame may I ask you what Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans' intentions are? Will he accept the crown if it is offered to him?'*

The two Princesses were hesitant in replying. Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans replied after a moment's silence: *'– Think, Monsieur de Chateaubriand of the evils that could arise. All honest people must work together to save the Republic. In Rome, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, you might render great service, or even here, if you do not wish to leave France!'*

*‘– Madame do not forget my devotion to the young King and to his mother.’*

*‘– Oh, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, have they treated you so well!’*

*‘– Your Royal Highness would not have me deny my whole existence.’*

*‘– Monsieur de Chateaubriand, you do not know my niece: she is so thoughtless...poor Caroline! ...I am going to find Monsieur le Duc d’Orleans, he will be better at persuading you than I am.’*

The Princess gave an order, and after a few minutes Louis-Philippe arrived. He was untidily dressed and looked extremely tired. I rose, and the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom tackled me:

*‘– Madame la Duchesse d’Orléans must have told you of the unfortunate position we are in.’*

And suddenly he uttered idyllic words on the happiness which he found in the countryside, and on the tranquil life which his tastes led him to enjoy with his children. I seized the opportunity of a pause between two verses to add a respectful comment of my own, and to repeat virtually what I had said to the Princesses.

*‘Ah,’ he cried, ‘that would be my wish! How I would love to be the tutor and guardian of that child! I think as you do, Monsieur de Chateaubriand: to accept the Duc de Bordeaux would certainly be the best thing to do. Only I fear that events may prove too powerful for us.’ – ‘Too powerful for us, Monseigneur? Are you not invested with every power? Let us rejoin Henri V; summon the Chambers and the army to you, outside Paris. At the first rumor of your departure, all the excitement will cease, and they will seek to shelter beneath your enlightened and protective power.’*

While I was speaking, I was watching Philippe. My advice caused him great uneasiness; I saw the desire to be king written on his brow. ‘Monsieur de Chateaubriand,’ he said without looking at me, ‘the matter is more complicated than you think; it is not like that. You do not understand the danger we are in. A furious attack could be mounted on the Chambers, with every excess of force, and we have nothing left to defend ourselves with.’

That sentence falling from Monsieur le Duc d’Orléans’ lips pleased me because it furnished me with the opportunity for a peremptory reply. ‘I understand the difficulty, Monseigneur; but there is a way of surmounting it. If you find yourself unable to rejoin Henri V as I have just proposed, you can take another route. The Session is about to open: whatever may be the first proposition put by the Deputies, declare that the present Chamber lacks the necessary powers (which is indeed true) to settle the form of government; say that France must be consulted, and a new assembly must be elected with ad hoc powers to settle so great a matter. Your Royal Highness in that way will be adopting the most popular position; the Republican Party, which is a risk to you today, will praise you to the skies. During the two months it will take to form a fresh legislature, you can re-organize the National Guard; all your friends and those of the young King will work alongside you in the provinces. Let the Deputies come then and plead the cause I am defending, publicly, at the rostrum. That cause, secretly supported by you, would obtain the largest majority of the votes. The moment of anarchy having passed, you will have nothing more to fear from Republican violence. I do not even think it very difficult for you to bring General Lafayette and Monsieur Lafitte over to your side. What a role for you Monseigneur! You will reign for fifteen years in your pupil’s name; in fifteen years, it will be time for us all to rest; you will have had the glory, unique in

*history, of being in a position to take the throne and of having left it to the legitimate heir; and at the same time you will have helped that child become one of the luminaries of the century, and will have rendered him capable of ruling France: one of your daughters might one day bear the scepter with him.'*

Philippe's gaze wandered vaguely somewhere over my head: *'Excuse me, Monsieur de Chateaubriand,'* he said, *'I have left a deputation in order to speak to you, to whom I must return. Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans will have explained to you how happy I would be to do what you desire; but, be aware, that it is only I who hold back the threatening tide. If the Royalist party is not massacred, it will owe its survival to me alone.'*

*'— Monseigneur,'* I replied, to this statement which was so unexpected and so far from the subject of our conversation, *'I have witnessed massacres: those who passed through the Revolution were hardened. Greybeards do not allow themselves to be frightened by things which make conscripts fear.'*

His Royal Highness withdrew, and I went to find my friends:

*'— Well?'* they cried.

*'— Well, he wants to be King.'*

*'— And Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans?'*

*'— She wants to be Queen.'*

*'— They told you so?'*

*'— The one spoke to me of sheep-pens, the other of the perils which threaten France and the thoughtlessness of poor Caroline; both wished me to understand that I could be useful to them, and neither would look me in the face.'*

Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans wished to see me again. Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans did not involve himself in this conversation. Madame Adélaïde was there as before. Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans explained clearly the favors with which Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans proposed to honor me. She had the goodness to mention what she called my influence over public opinion, the sacrifices I had made, and the aversion which Charles X and his family had always shown for me, despite my services. She told me that if I would join the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, His Royal Highness would have great delight in re-establishing me there; but that I might perhaps prefer to return to Rome, and that she (Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans) would take great pleasure in seeing me adopt this last suggestion, in the interests of our sacred religion.

*'Madame,'* I replied immediately in a forceful manner: *'I see that Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans' mind is made up; I assume that he has weighed the consequences, and has seen the years of misery and danger which he will have to pass through; I have therefore nothing more to say. I have not come here to demonstrate any lack of respect for the Bourbon line; moreover I have only gratitude for Madame's kindness. Leaving the major objections to one side, reasons deriving from principles and events, I beg Your Royal Highness to allow me to speak of what concerns myself.'*

*'You have chosen to speak of what you call my influence over public opinion. Well, if that influence is real, it is founded on public esteem; now, I would lose that esteem the moment I changed flags. Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans might consider he had acquired a supporter, but he would merely have a wretched phrase-maker in his service, an oath-breaker whose voice would no longer be heard, a renegade whom anyone would have the right to throw mud at, or spit in his face. To the wavering words he might stammer in favor of Louis-Philippe, would be contrasted whole volumes he has published in support of the line which has abdicated. Am I not the person, Madame, who wrote the pamphlet Of Bonaparte and the Bourbons, the articles on the arrival of Louis XVIII at Compiègne, the Report of the King's Council at Ghent, and the History of the life and death of Monsieur le Duc de Berry? I do not know if there is a single page of mine in which the name of my former kings' family does not count for something, and in which it is not surrounded by my protestations of love and loyalty; something which admits a character of personal attachment all the more remarkable, in that Madame knows I do not believe in kings. At the mere thought of desertion, a blush mounts to my face; I would go and throw myself in the Seine tomorrow. I beg Madame to excuse the force of my words; I am filled with my sense of her kindness; I will retain a deep and grateful memory of it, but she would not wish me to be dishonored: have pity on me, Madame, have pity!'*

I had remained standing and, bowing, I took my leave. Mademoiselle d'Orléans had said not a word. She rose, and as she departed, said to me: *'I do not pity you, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, I do not pity you!'* I was astonished at those few words, and the accent with which they were pronounced.

That was my last political temptation; I could have considered myself an honorable man according to Saint Hilaire, since he affirms that men are exposed to devilish enterprises because of their holiness: *Victoria ei est magis, exacta de santis: his victory is greater when won against the holy*. My refusal was that of a fool; where is the public who would value it? Could I not have ranged myself with those men, virtuous sons of this earth, who serve their country before everything else? Unfortunately, I am not a creature of the present age, and never bow to fortune. There is nothing in common between me and Cicero; but his weakness is not an excuse: posterity cannot pardon a moment of weakness in one great man for the sake of another great man; what would have become of my poor life if it had lost its only virtue, its integrity, for the sake of Louis-Philippe d'Orléans?

On the evening of the conversation above at the Palais-Royal, I met Monsieur de Saint-Aulaire at Madame Récamier's. I took no pleasure in asking about his affairs, but he asked about mine. He was fresh from the country and still full of the events he had witnessed: *'Ah!'* he cried, *'How pleased I am to see you! Here's a fine thing! I hope we of the Luxembourg will do our duty. It would be strange if the Peers were to dispossess Henri V of the crown! I am sure you will not leave me to take to the rostrum alone.'*

As my decision was made, I was quite calm; my response to Monsieur de Saint-Aulaire's ardor appeared cool. He left, spoke to his friends, and left me to take the rostrum alone: long live men of spirit with light hearts and frivolous minds!

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 6

#### The Republican Party's last gasp

The Republican Party was still struggling under the feet of the friends who had betrayed it. On the 6th of August, a deputation of twenty members designated by the central committee of the twelve districts of Paris presented itself at the Chamber of Deputies to hand over an address which General Thiard and Monsieur Duris-Dufresne spirited away from the volunteer delegation. In this address it was said: *'that the nation could recognize as a constitutional government neither an elected Chamber nominated during the existence and under the influence of the monarchy it had overthrown, nor an aristocratic Chamber, whose institution was in direct conflict with the Princes who had placed weapons in its (the nation's) hands; that the central committee of the twelve arrondissements granting a de facto and highly provisional power to the Chamber, as a revolutionary necessity, to carry out any urgent measures, called with all their might for a free and popular election of representatives who would truly reflect the needs of the people; and that only the primary assemblies could lead to this result. If it were otherwise, the nation would reduce to nothing all who tried to obstruct it in the exercise of its rights.'*

All this was quite reasonable, but the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom aspired to the throne, and fear and ambition had hastened to grant it to him. The people of today wanted a revolution but had no idea how to go about it; the Jacobins, whom they modelled themselves on, threw the men of the Palais-Royal and the cowards from the two Chambers into the river. Monsieur de Lafayette was reduced to impotent expressions of his wishes: delighted to have revived the National Guard, he allowed Philippe, whose nurse he had thought to be, to toy with him like a new-born babe; he was dazed with happiness. The old General represented freedom anaesthetized, while the Republic of 1793 was nothing but an empty skull.

The truth is that the Chamber truncated and without a mandate had no right to dispose of the crown: a Convention expressly gathered together, and formed from the House of Lords and a newly elected House of Commons settled the fate of James II's throne. Moreover it is certain that the *rump* of the Chamber of Deputies, the 221, imbued with the traditions of hereditary monarchy under Charles X, showed no real aptitude for elective monarchy; they halted it at its inception, and forced it to revert to principles of quasi-legitimacy. Those who forged the new monarchy's sword introduced a flaw into it which sooner or later would make it shatter.

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 7

The 7th of August – A session of the Chamber of Peers – My speech – I leave the Luxembourg Palace never to return – My resignations

The 7th of August was a memorable day for me; it was the day on which I had the pleasure of finishing my political career as I had begun; a pleasure rare enough these days that one should rejoice in it. The declaration of the Chamber of Deputies concerning the vacant monarchy was carried to the Chamber of Peers. I went to sit in my place on the highest rank of chairs, facing the President. The Peers seemed to me both preoccupied and weary. If some bore the pride of their impending disloyalty on their brow, others bore the shame of a remorse they had not the courage to express. Gazing at this assembly I said: *‘So! Those who received gifts from Charles X while he prospered will now desert him in his misfortune! Shall they whose special mission was to defend the hereditary monarchy, those courtiers who enjoyed their closeness to the King, betray him? They sat at his door at Saint-Cloud; they embraced him at Rambouillet; he pressed their hands in a last farewell; will they now raise those hands, still warm from the last clasp, against him? Will that Chamber, which resounded for fifty years with their protestations of devotion, now echo to their oath-breaking? Yet, it is because of them that Charles X has fallen; it is they who urged the decrees; they stamped their feet with delight when they appeared, when they thought themselves conquerors, in that silent moment that precedes the clap of thunder.’*

These thoughts swam confusedly and mournfully through my mind. The peerage had become a triple receptacle of corruptions, those of the Old Monarchy, the Republic and the Empire. As for the Republicans of 1793, transformed into Senators, and the Bonapartist Generals, from them I expected familiar behavior: they deposed an extraordinary man to whom they owed everything: they would depose a King whom they had confirmed in possession of the goods and honors which they had heaped on their first master. Let the wind change direction and they would depose the usurper to whom they prepared to throw the crown.

I mounted the rostrum. There was a profound silence; the faces showed embarrassment, everyone turned his chair away and gazed at the ground. Save for a few Peers resolved, as I was, to resign, no one dared raise their eyes to the level of the rostrum. I record my speech here because it sums up my life, and because it is my principal title to future esteem.

*‘Gentlemen,*

*The declaration brought to this Chamber is much simpler for me than for those of you who profess a different opinion to mine. One fact, in this declaration, above all others, sprang to my eyes, or rather pained them. If we were in normal times, I would doubtless examine carefully the changes that are proposed in the operation of the Charter. Several of those changes were proposed by me. I am astonished only that anyone could speak to this House of a reactionary measure concerning the Peers created by Charles X. I am not known for my liking for such creation of Peers in batches, and you know I have opposed even the threat of it; but to act as judges of our colleagues, to strike from the table of Peers whomever one wishes, when one happens to be strongest, smacks of proscription. Do you wish to destroy the Peerage? So be it: better to lose one’s life than beg for it.*



*I reproach myself already for uttering these few words concerning a detail which, important though it may be, is lost in the grandeur of present events. France is directionless, and I will concern myself with what adds or detracts from steering a vessel whose rudder is shattered! I will ignore therefore everything in this declaration of the elected Chamber which is of secondary interest, and, keeping to the sole fact, true or pretended, that it proclaims, that of the vacancy of the throne, I will come straight to the point.*

*A preliminary question must be dealt with: if the throne is vacant, we are free to choose our form of government.*

*Before offering the crown to some individual or other, it is helpful to know what kind of political structure will constitute the social order. Shall we establish a republic or a new monarchy?*

*Will a republic or a new monarchy offer France sufficient guarantee of longevity, strength and peace?*

*A republic would have against it first of all the memory of the Republic itself. Those memories are by no means erased. Those times are not forgotten when Death marched, between Liberty and Equality, its arms round both. When you fall into fresh anarchy will you waken Hercules from the marble, he alone capable of strangling the monster? Of men worthy to live in men's minds there have been only five or six in our history: posterity may see another Napoleon in a thousand years or so, as for us, do not expect it.*

*Then, given the state of our morals, and our relations with the governments surrounding us, a republic, if I am not mistaken, does not seem to me to be viable at the moment. The first problem would be to obtain a unanimous vote from the French people. What right has the population of Paris to force the population of Marseilles or any other town to be part of a republic? Will they have one republic or twenty or thirty republics? Shall they be federated or independent? Let us pass over these obstacles. Let us suppose a single republic: with our in-born sense of familiarity, do you think that a President, however grave, however respectable, however able, could last for a year in charge of our affairs without being tempted to resign? Barely protected by the law and by tradition, thwarted, libeled, insulted morning and evening by hidden rivals and trouble-makers, he would inspire little confidence among the commercial and property-owning classes; he would possess neither the dignity needed to deal with foreign cabinets, nor the power necessary to maintain order at home. If he employs revolutionary measures, the republic will be rendered odious; a troubled Europe will profit from such divisions, foment them, and intervene, and we will find her once more involved in frightful struggles. Representative republicanism is without doubt the future state of the world, but those times have not yet arrived.*

*I pass to the monarchy.*

*A king, named by the Chambers or elected by the people, will always be a novelty, however he acts. Now, I assume that we wish for freedom, above all freedom of the Press by means of which, and for which, the people have achieved a remarkable victory. Well! Any new monarchy will be forced, sooner or later, to gag that freedom. Did not Napoleon himself confess it? Daughter of our miseries and slave of our glory, the freedom of the Press will have no security except under a government that is already deep-rooted. A monarchy, bastard child of a blood-stained night, has it nothing to dread from freely expressed opinion? If these people may preach a republic, and those some other system, do you not fear that you*

*will soon be obliged to have recourse to the laws of 'exception', despite the anathema against censure added to article 8 of the Charter?*

*Then, friends of order and freedom, what will you have gained from the changes you propose? You will fall perforce into a republic, or into legal servitude. The monarchy will be inundated and swept away by the torrent of democratic laws, or the monarch by the work of factions.*

*In the first intoxication of success, you think everything is easy; you hope to meet all exigencies, all moods, all interests; you flatter yourself that everyone will set aside their personal views and vanities; you believe that superiority of intellect and the wisdom of government will surmount numberless difficulties: but, after a few months, practice refutes theory.*

*I only present to you, gentlemen, some of the problems associated with a republic or a new monarchy. If both have their dangers, there is a third way, and that way is well-worth my spending a few words on.*

*Weak government has tarnished the crown, and its ministers have capped violation of the law with murder; they have toyed with oaths sworn to heaven, and laws sworn to earth.*

*Foreigners, you who twice entered Paris without resistance, know the true cause of your success: you presented yourselves in the name of legalized force. If you rushed today to aid tyranny, do you think the gates of the capital of the civilized world would open so easily to you? The French nation has flourished, since your departure, under a constitutional legal frame-work, and our forty-year old offspring are now giants; our conscripts in Algeria, our colleges in Paris, will show you the sons of the conquerors of Austerlitz, Marengo, and Jena; but sons strengthened by all with which freedom enhances glory.*

*No defence was more legitimate or more heroic than that of the people of Paris. They did not rise against the law; as long as the social pact was respected, the people remained peaceful; they suffered insult, provocation and threats without complaint; they owed their wealth and their blood in exchange for the Charter, they have given both.*

*But when having lied to them to the end, suddenly the hour of slavery rang; when the conspiracy of stupidity and hypocrisy promptly emerged; when a Palace Terror organized by eunuchs thought to revive the Terror of the Republic and the iron yoke of Empire, then the people armed themselves with intelligence and courage; shopkeepers proved able to breathe powder-fumes as easily as others, and a corporal and four soldiers were needed to overcome them. A century could not have better nurtured the fate of a nation than the three suns which have just shone on France. A great crime has been committed; it has produced the energetic expression of a principle: should we overthrow the established order of things, because of that crime and the moral and political triumph that followed it? Let us reflect:*

*Charles X and his descendants are deposed or have abdicated, as it pleases you to hear; but the throne is not vacant: after them there is a child; would you condemn his innocence?*

*What blood cries out against him today? Would you dare to claim that it is his father's? This orphan, raised in a patriotic school, with a love of constitutional government and imbued with the ideas of this century, would be a king who could relate to the needs of the future. It is to the administrator of his*

guardianship that the declaration on which you are about to vote should have been made; reaching his majority, the young monarch would renew the oath. The present King, the actual King would be Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans, Regent of the Kingdom, a Prince who has lived among his people, and who knows that monarchy today can only be a monarchy conducted with reason and consent. This natural combination seems to me to be a means of major conciliation, and would save France maybe from the disturbances which are the consequence of violent changes in a State.

*Is it truly reasonable to say that a child, separated from his masters, would not have time to forget even their names before reaching manhood; or to say that he would remain infatuated with certain dogmas attached to his birth, after a lengthy popular education?*

*It is not because of some sentimental devotion or nursemaid's tenderness transmitted from cradle to cradle, from Henri IV to the young Henri, that I plead a cause where everyone would once more be against me, if it triumphed. I do not wish to partake of romance, or chivalry, or martyrdom; I do not believe in the divine right of kings, I believe in the power of revolutions and events. I do not even invoke the Charter; I raise my sights higher; I draw on the sphere of philosophy of the age in which my life will end: I propose the Duc de Bordeaux simply as a necessity, with a better cause than that which has been argued.*

*I know that in removing that child, they wish to establish the principle of the sovereignty of the people: a foolishness of the ancient school, which shows that, in relation to politics, our former democrats have made no more progress than the veteran royalists. There is no absolute sovereignty anywhere; freedom does not flow from political rights, as was thought in the eighteenth century; it derives from natural rights, which can be seen to exist under any form of government, and may exist and exist more extensively under a monarchy than a republic; but this is neither the time nor the place to indulge in a course of politics.*

*I will content myself with remarking that, when a nation has dispossessed itself of its monarch, it has often dispossessed itself of liberty too; I will merely observe that the principle of hereditary monarchy, absurd at first sight, has been found, by custom, preferable to the principle of an elected monarchy. The reasons are so evident that I do not need to develop them. You will choose a king today: who will stop you choosing another one tomorrow? The law, you say? What law? Indeed, it is one you yourselves frame!*

*There is a much simpler way of deciding the issue, which is to say: 'We do not want the elder line of Bourbons. And why do we not want it? Because we are victorious, we have triumphed in a just and holy cause; we are claiming a double right of conquest.'*

*Fine: proclaim the sovereignty of force. Then guard yourselves carefully against that force; since if it escapes your control in a few months' time, you will have no room to complain. Such is human nature! The clearest minds and the most just do not always rise above success. They are the first, those spirits, to invoke the law against violence; they support that law with all the superiority of their talents, and, at the very moment when the truth of what they are saying is demonstrated by the most abominable abuse of force and by the overthrow of that force, the conquerors seize the weapons they have broken! Dangerous tools which will wound their hands without being of service to them.*

*I have carried the battle onto my adversaries' ground; I am not going to dwell in the past beneath the banner of the dead, a banner not without its glory, but which is draped around the staff which bears it, because it lacks a breath of wind to raise it. When I stirred the dust of thirty-five Capets, I was not employing an argument one would wish solely to rely on. The idolatry of names is abolished: monarchy is no longer a religion: it is a form of politics preferable at this instant to any other, because it can better maintain order and freedom.*

*A vain Cassandra, I have wearied the Crown and the Peerage with my fruitless warnings; it only remains for me to sit amongst the fragments of a shipwreck I have so many times predicted. I recognize all sorts of forces in misfortune, except the force that could release me from my oaths of loyalty. I must also preserve a lifetime's consistency: after all I have done, said and written in support of the Bourbons, I would be the lowest of wretches if I disowned them at the moment when they make their way into exile for the third and final time.*

*I leave fear to those generous loyalists who have never sacrificed their position or a single farthing to their loyalty; to those champions of the altar and the throne, who formerly treated me as a renegade, apostate, and revolutionary. Pious libellists, the renegade calls to you! Come then and stammer a word, a single word beside him, in support of that unfortunate master who heaped his gifts on you and whom you have ruined! Provokers of many a coup d'état, asserters of constitutional power, where are you? You are hiding in the mud from whose depths you valiantly raise your head to calumniate the true servants of the King; your silence today matches your language of yesterday. Let all those valiant knights whose projected exploits have caused the descendants of Henri IV to be chased with pitchforks tremble now as they squat beneath the tricolor cockade; it is natural enough. The noble colors with which they are adorned protect the person, but fail to conceal his cowardice.*

*Furthermore, in expressing myself freely at this rostrum, I do not at all consider it an act of heroism. We are no longer in an age when their opinions cost men their lives; if we were, I would have spoken a hundred times more loudly. The best shield is a breast that does not fear to find itself open to the enemy. No, gentlemen, we should not fear either a nation whose sense matches its courage, nor generous Youth, which I admire, with which I sympathize with all the power of my spirit, to whom I wish, as I do my country, honor, glory, and liberty.*

*Furthest from my thoughts above all is the idea of casting seeds of division throughout France, and that is why I have denied my speech too passionate a tone. If I had the personal conviction that a child should be left in the obscure and happy ranks of society, to assure the repose of thirty three million people, I would regard any opposition to the needs of the moment as a crime: I do not have that conviction. If I had the right to dispose of a crown, I would lay it willingly at the feet of Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans. But I only see a tomb in Saint-Denis vacant, and not a throne.*

*Whatever fate awaits the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, I will never be his enemy if he brings happiness to my country. I only ask to preserve my freedom of conscience and the right to go and die wherever I can find freedom and repose.*

*I vote against the proposals in the declaration.'*

I had been calm enough when beginning my speech; but gradually emotion overcame me; when I arrived at the passage; *A vain Cassandra, I have wearied the Crown and the Peerage with my fruitless warnings, words failed me, and I was forced to put my handkerchief to my eyes to wipe away tears of emotion and bitterness. Indignation gave me back my voice for the paragraph which followed: Pious libellists, the renegade calls to you! Come then and stammer a word, a single word beside him, in support of that unfortunate master who heaped his gifts on you and whom you have ruined!* My gaze fell then on the ranks to which I addressed those words.

Several Peers seemed stunned; they sank into their chairs to the point where I could no longer see them behind their colleagues sitting motionless in front of them. This speech had several repercussions: all the parties there were hurt, but all kept quiet, because I had placed a great sacrifice alongside great truth. I descended from the rostrum; I left the chamber; I went to the cloakroom, I took off my Peer's costume, my sword, and my plumed hat; I detached the white cockade from it, kissed it, and put it in the little pocket on the left side of my black frock coat which I donned, and buttoned over my heart. My servant picked up the Peer's clothes, and I abandoned, while shaking the dust from my feet, that Palace of treason, which I have never re-entered.

On the 10th and 12th of August, I finished despoiling myself and sent in my various letters of resignation;

*'Paris, this 10th of August 1830.*

*'Monsieur le Président de la Chambre des Pairs,*

*Unable to swear an oath of loyalty to Louis Philippe d'Orléans as King of the French, I find myself legally incapacitated such as to prevent me from attending the sessions of the hereditary Chamber. A solitary mark of King Louis XVIII's generosity and of royal munificence remains to me: that is an income as a Peer of twelve thousand francs, which was granted to me to maintain, if not in style, but at least with the freedom to satisfy my primary needs, the high dignity to which I was called. It would not be right for me to retain a favor attached to the exercise of functions which I cannot fulfil. Consequently, I have the honor to resign into your hands my income as a Peer.'*

*'Paris, this 12th of August 1830.*

*'Monsieur le Ministre des Finances,*

*An income as a Peer remains to me, due to Louis XVIII's generosity and the National munificence, of twelve thousand francs, arranged as a life annuity, inscribed in the grand ledger of public debts, and only transmissible to the first generation by direct title. Being unable to swear the oath of allegiance to Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans as King of the French, it would not be right for me to continue to accept the income attached to functions I no longer exercise. Consequently, I am resigning it into your hands: it will have ceased to accrue to me on the day (10th of August) on which I wrote to Monsieur le Président de la Chambre des Pairs telling him that it was impossible for me to swear the required oath.*

*I have the honor to be, with the highest esteem, etc.'*

*'Paris, this 12th of August 1830.*

*Monsieur le Grand Référéndaire*

*I have the honor to send you a copy of two letters which I have addressed, one to Monsieur le Président de la Chambre des Pairs, the other to Monsieur le Ministre des Finances. You will see that I renounce my income as a Peer, and that in consequence my authorized representative will only draw on that income due up to the 10th of August when I announced that I could not take the oath.*

*I have the honor to be, with the highest esteem, etc.’*

*‘Paris, this 12th of August 1830.*

*Monsieur le Ministre de la Justice,*

*I have the honor to send you my resignation as Minister of State.*

*I am, with the highest esteem,*

*Monsieur le Ministre de la Justice,*

*Your very humble and obedient servant’*

I was as naked as a lesser St. John the Baptist; but for a long time I had been accustomed to live on wild honey, and I had no fear that Herodias’ daughter would covet my grey head.

My gilded embroidery, straps, fringes, braiding and epaulettes, sold to a goldsmith, and melted down by him, brought me in seven hundred francs, the end product of all my grandeur.

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 8

#### Charles X embarks at Cherbourg

Now, where was Charles X? He was travelling towards exile, accompanied by his Bodyguards, escorted by three Commissioners, crossing France without even exciting the curiosity of the peasants ploughing their furrows beside the highroad. In two or three little towns, hostile demonstrations were mounted; in others, the bourgeois and the women showed signs of pity. One must remember that Bonaparte made no more noise passing from Fontainebleau to Toulon, that France was no more moved, and that the victor in so many battles was nearly massacred at Orgon. In this weary land, the greatest events are no more than dramas played for our amusement: they occupy the spectator while the curtain is raised, and when it falls it leaves a vain memory. Sometimes Charles X and his family halted at miserable transport-stops to eat a meal at the end of a dirty table at which the carters dined with them. Henri V and his sister amused themselves in the yard among the innkeeper's pigeons and pullets. As I have said: the monarchy departed, and people went to their windows to watch it pass.

Heaven was pleased at this moment to insult the victors and the vanquished. While it was still being claimed that the *whole* of France had been indignant at the decrees, King Philippe received various addresses from the provinces, sent to King Charles X to congratulate the latter *on the salutary measures he had taken which would preserve the monarchy*.

The Bey of Tittery, for his part, sent to the dethroned monarch, who was travelling towards Cherbourg, the following submission:

*'In the name of God, etc., I recognize as absolute sovereign Charles X, the great and victorious; I will pay him tribute, etc.'* One could not have toyed more ironically with the fortunes of each. Today revolutions are engineered mechanically; they are manufactured so swiftly that a monarch, still king at the borders of his State, is already no more than an exile in his own capital.

In the country's indifference to Charles X, there was something more than weariness: one must recognize the progress of democratic ideas and the assimilation of rank. In a former epoch, the fall of a King of France would have been an enormous event; time has toppled monarchy from the heights on which it was placed, kings have been brought close to us, the distance separating them from the popular classes has diminished. If one was hardly surprised to meet the descendant of Saint Louis on the highroad like the rest of the world, it was not through any spirit of hatred or design, it was quite simply through a feeling of social levelling, which had penetrated minds and acted on the masses without them being aware.

Curses, Cherbourg, on your ominous environs! It was near Cherbourg that the winds of anger deposited Edward III to ravage our country; it was not far from Cherbourg that the winds of an enemy victory shattered Tourville's fleet; it was at Cherbourg that the winds of deceptive prosperity nudged Louis XVI towards the scaffold; it was to Cherbourg that a wind from who knows what shore carried our former Princes. The coast of Great-Britain, where William the Conqueror landed, witnessed the disembarkation of Charles the Tenth without lance or pennon; he went to find at Holyrood, the memories of his youth, hung on the walls of that palace of the Stuarts, like old engravings yellowed by time.

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 9

#### How the July Revolution will be viewed

I have described the Three Days as they unfolded before me: a certain contemporary coloring, true at the moment when it occurs, false when the moment has gone, thus extends across the picture. There is no revolution so prodigious that, if described from minute to minute, is not reduced to smaller proportions. Events emerge from the womb of things, like men from their mothers' wombs, accompanied by the failings of nature. Misery and grandeur are twin sisters, they are born together; but if the birth-pangs are vigorous, the pains die-away after a time, and only the grandeur remains. To judge the reality that remains impartially, one must adopt the point of view from which posterity will consider the completed event.

Detaching myself from the meanness of character and action of which I had been the witness, considering the July Days only in terms of what will remain, I spoke rightly in my speech to the Chamber of Peers: *'the people armed themselves with intelligence and courage; shopkeepers proved able to breathe powder-fumes as easily as others, and a corporal and four soldiers were needed to overcome them. A century could not have better nurtured the fate of a nation than the three suns which have just shone on France.'*

Indeed, the people, strictly speaking, had been brave and generous during the day of the 28th. The Guard had lost more than three hundred men, dead or wounded; it rendered full justice to the lower classes, who alone fought on that day, and among whom were included some tainted individuals, who nevertheless brought them no dishonour. The students from the École Polytechnique, emerging from their college too late to take part in events, were made leaders of the people on the 29th, with an admirable simplicity and naivety.

Champions absent from the people's struggle came to join its ranks on the 29th, when the greatest danger was past; others, equally victorious, did not participate in victory until the 30th and 31st.

On the troops side, almost the same thing happened, the soldiers and officers were barely engaged; the staff, who had previously deserted Bonaparte at Fontainebleau, stood on the heights of Saint-Cloud, looking to see which way the wind would blow the powder-fumes. They formed a queue at Charles X's accession; at his abdication no one was to be found.

The moderation of the common people matched their courage; order came swiftly out of confusion. One must have seen the half-naked workers, on guard at the gates of the public gardens, to prevent according to instructions other ragged workers from entering, to gain an idea of that power of duty which gripped the servants become masters. They could have taken the price of their blood, and let themselves be tempted by their poverty. There was no sight, as on the 10th of August 1792, of the Swiss being massacred as they fled. All views were respected; never, with a few exceptions, has victory been less abused. The victors, carrying wounded guardsmen through the crowd shouted: *'Respect the brave!'* When a soldier died, they said: *'Peace to the dead!'* The fifteen years of the Restoration, under a constitutional regime, had given birth among us to that spirit of humanity, legality and justice which twenty-five years of revolutionary and military spirit could not have produced. The right to force introduced into our conduct seemed to have become a common right.



The consequences of the July Revolution will be felt. That revolution has announced the end of all monarchies; kings cannot reign today except by strength of arms; a viable method for the moment, but who knows for how long: the age of repeated Janissaries is over.

Thucydides and Tacitus are of little assistance to us with regard to the *Three Days*; we need Bossuet to explain events produced by Providence; a genius who sees all, but without transgressing the limits set by his reason and his splendor, like the sun which moves between two brilliant horizons, and which Orientals call the *slave* of God.

Do not seek too near to us the source of a motion placed far off: the mediocrity of men, inexplicable dissent, hatred, ambition, the presumption of some, the prejudices of others, secret conspiracies, radical factions, well or badly taken measures, courage or lack of courage; all these things are accidents, not causes of the event. When they said they no longer wanted the Bourbons, who had become odious because they were considered to have been imposed on France by foreign powers, that proud disdain explains nothing adequately.

The July actions do not belong properly to politics; they belong to the social revolution which acts ceaselessly. Linked to the general revolution, the 28th of July 1830 is merely the inevitable successor to the 21st of January 1793. The work of our upper debating chambers had been suspended, it had not been ended. During the course of twenty years, the French became accustomed, as the English did under Cromwell, to being governed by other masters than their former kings. The fall of Charles X was a consequence of the decapitation of Louis XVI, as the dethronement of James II was a consequence of the execution of Charles I. The Revolution seemed extinguished by Bonaparte's glory, and Louis XVIII's freedoms, but its seed was not destroyed: lurking in the depths of our society it developed as the Restoration's mistakes grew, and soon erupted.

The workings of Providence are revealed in the anti-monarchic change operating. Superficial minds may see nothing more in the three day revolution than a skirmish, and everything seems simple; but those who reflect know that an enormous stride was taken: the principle of the sovereignty of the people has been substituted for the principle of royal sovereignty; hereditary monarchy has altered to elective monarchy. The 21st of January had taught that one could do away with a king's head; the 29th of July showed that one could do away with the Crown. Now every reality good or bad that manifests itself is acquired from the crowd. Change ceases to be extraordinary; it no longer presents itself to the mind and conscience as impious, when it results from a popular idea. The Franks exercised sovereignty collectively, then they delegated it to several leaders; then those leaders conferred it on a single person; then that lone leader usurped it to the benefit of his family. Now we regress from hereditary monarchy to elective monarchy, from elective monarchy we will slide into a Republic. Such is the history of society; that is how by degrees government emerges from the people and returns to it.

Let us not think of the work of July, then, as a superfluity of a day or two; let us not imagine that the Legitimacy is immediately going to re-establish the succession, by right of primogeniture: let us no longer persuade ourselves that July will suddenly die a fine death. Without doubt the Orléans line will not take root; it will not be for such an outcome that so much trouble, blood and genius has been expended for half a century! But July, if it does not lead to the final destruction of France with the annihilation of all freedom, July will bear natural fruit: that fruit is democracy. That fruit will be bitter and blood-stained maybe; but monarchy is a foreign graft which will not take on a republican stem.

So, let us not confuse an improvised king with the revolution which chanced to give birth to him: the latter, such as we see it being enacted, is in contradiction to his principles; it does not seem viable since it is burdened with a throne; but let it only carry on for a few years, this revolution, and what will arise, what will have happened, will change the facts in ways yet to be known. Men have destroyed or no longer see things as they once saw them; adolescents are attaining the age of reason; fresh generations are replacing the corrupt generations; cloths drenched by a hospital's wounds, washed by a great river, only soil the wave which passes beneath those corruptions: upstream and downstream the current maintains or regains its clarity.

July, free at its source, has produced only an enchained monarchy; but the time will come when, rid of the crown, it will undergo those transformations which are the law of beings; then, it will live in an atmosphere appropriate to its nature.

The Republican Party error, the Legitimist illusion are both deplorable, and exceed the limits of democracy and royalty: the first thinks that violence is the only route to success; the second thinks that the past is the only gate to salvation. Now, there is a moral law which controls society, a general legitimacy which rules the specific legitimacy. This great law and this great legitimacy are the exercise of man's natural rights, ruled by duty; since it is duty which creates rights, and not rights which create duty; passions and vices relegate you to the class of slaves. The general legitimacy would have had no obstacles to overcome if it had protected, as deriving from the same principle, the specific legitimacy.

Moreover, an observation will suffice to help us understand the prodigious and majestic power of our ancient sovereigns: I have already said, and cannot too often repeat, that all monarchies will die with the French monarchy.

Indeed, the idea of monarchy is found wanting at the very moment when the monarch is found wanting; only the idea of democracy envelops him now. My young King will carry away in his arms the monarchy of the world. It is all done with.

While I was writing all this, about what the revolution of 1830 might become in the future, I was hard put to defend myself from a feeling that spoke to me in contradiction to reason. I took that feeling to be my pang of displeasure at the troubles of 1830; was I defying my own inner self, and perhaps, in my over-faithful impartiality, exaggerating the future consequences of the Three Days. Now, ten years have passed since Charles X's fall: was July solid? We are now at the beginning of 1840, and what abasement France has descended into! If I could take any pleasure in the humiliation of a government originating in France, I might experience a sort of pride in re-reading, in *Le Congrès de Vérone*, my correspondence with Mr. Canning: certainly, it is not like that which they have just made known to the Chamber of Deputies. Whose fault is it? Is it the Prince Elect's? Is it due to ministerial incompetence? Is it the nation's, whose character and genius seem depleted? Our ideas are progressive, but does our way of life support them? It would not be astonishing if a nation fourteen centuries old, which has terminated its lengthy course with marvelous explosions, had reached its end. If you turn to the end of these *Memoirs*, you will see that in rendering justice to all that has seemed fine to me in the various epochs of our history I consider that in the last analysis the society of old is finished.

*(Note: Paris, the 3rd of December 1840)*

## BOOK XXXIII

### CHAPTER 10

#### The end of my political career

Here ends my *political career*. That career should also close my *Memoirs*, there being nothing left but to continue with the experiences of my life. Three disasters marked the three preceding sections of my life: Louis XVI was executed during my career as traveller and soldier; at the end of my literary career, Bonaparte vanished; Charles X, in falling, has ended my political career.

I fixed the age of revolution in literature, and likewise in politics I formulated the principles of representative government; my diplomatic correspondence, I think, was worthy of my literary compositions. It is possible that both of them may count for nothing, but it is certain that they are of equal value.

In France, at the rostrum of the Chamber of Peers and in my writings, I exercised such an influence, that I first obtained Monsieur de Villèle's entry into government, and then forced him to resign because of my opposition, after he had become my enemy. All of that is demonstrated by what you have read.

The great event of my political career was the War in Spain. It was for me, in that career, what *Le Génie du Christianisme* had been in my literary career. Fate chose to entrust me with the great adventure, which under the Restoration, might have guided the march of society towards the future. It snatched away my dreams, and turned me into a conductor of events. At the table where she made me gamble, she placed as adversaries the two first ministers of the day, Prince Metternich and Mr. Canning; I won my game against them. All serious minds who counted in government in those days agreed that they had found me a Statesman. (See the letters and dispatches of various Courts, in *Le Congrès de Verone*, and also consult *L'Ambassade de Rome*.) Bonaparte had foreseen that before them, despite my books. I think therefore, without boasting, that politicians valued the writer in me; but I attach no value to the fame acquired from politics; that is why I allow myself to speak of it.

If, after the Peninsular adventure, I had not been thrown away by blind men, the course of our destiny would have been altered; France would have taken back her frontiers, the equilibrium of Europe would have been re-established; the Restoration, in glory, might still have had long to run, and my diplomatic work would have also counted for something in our history. Between my two lives, there is only a difference in outcome. My literary career, completely achieved, has produced all that it should, because it depended only on myself. My political career was halted suddenly in the midst of success, because that depended on others.

Nevertheless, I recognize that my form of politics was only applicable to the Restoration. If a transformation takes place in principles, men and society what was good yesterday seems obsolete and outdated today. With regard to Spain, the relationship between the royal families ceased with the abolition of Salic Law, there is no longer any question of creating an impenetrable frontier beyond the Pyrenees; we must accept the field of battle that Austria and England may one day offer us there; things must be regarded from the position they have now reached; and we must abandon, not without regret, a firm yet reasonable course, whose benefits were certain, in the long run it is true. I am conscious of having served the Legitimacy as it should be served. I saw the future as clearly as I see it now; only I would have reached it by a less perilous route, so that the Legitimacy, familiar with our constitutional teaching, would

not have stumbled into a dangerous path. Now, my projects are no longer realizable: Russia is turning elsewhere. If I went now to the Peninsula, where minds have had time to alter, it would be with different thoughts: I would occupy myself only with an alliance between the nations, suspicious, jealous, passionate, uncertain and volatile though she is, and I would no longer dream of relations between kings. I would say to France: *'You have left the beaten track, for a path among precipices; well, explore the marvels and the perils. To us, innovation, enterprise, discovery! Come, and with the weapons, if necessary, that you favor. Where is the new? Is it in the East? Let us go there. Where shall we bear our courage and intelligence? Hasten to those shores. Place us at the head of the great upsurge of the human race; let us not be overtaken; let the name of France be ahead of others in that crusade, just as it long ago reached Christ's tomb.'* Yes, if I was admitted to my country's councils, I would try to be useful to her given the dangerous principles she has adopted: to restrain her at present would be to condemn her to an ignoble death. I would not be satisfied with speech alone: joining the work of faith, I would organize soldiers and money, I would build vessels, like Noah, foreseeing the deluge, and if I were asked why, I would reply: *'Because it is France's wish.'* My dispatches warned the cabinets of Europe that nothing might stir in the world without our intervention; that if they were sharing out fragments of the world, the lion's share comes to us. We would cease to ask our neighbors humbly for the right to exist; the heart of France would beat freely, without any hand being applied to that heart to count its throbs; and since we seek new suns, I would throw myself down before their splendor and would no longer wait for nature's dawn to break.

Heaven send that those industrial interests in which we hope to find a new form of prosperity do not deceive anyone, that they are fertile also, as civilizing as those moral interests from which the old society emerged! The age will teach us whether they are an infertile dream of sterile minds that have not the ability to emerge from the material world.

Even though my role with the Legitimacy has ended, all my wishes are for France, whatever may be the powers her heedless whims make her obey. As for me, I no longer ask for anything; I would merely wish not to outlast the ruins crumbling at my feet. But the years are like Alps: scarcely has one ascended the first, than one sees others rising. Alas! Those last and highest peaks are uninhabited; whitened; arid.

**End of Book XXXIII**

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 1

#### Introduction

*Infirmierie de Marie-Thérèse*

*Paris, October 1830*

Emerging from the fracas of the Three Glorious Days, I was astonished at beginning the fourth part of this work with a feeling of profound calm; it seemed to me that I had doubled the Cape of Storms, and penetrated into a region of peace and silence. If I had died on the 7th of August of that year, the closing words of my speech to the Chamber of Peers would have been the last lines of my story; my catastrophe, being also that of the twelve centuries past, would have enhanced my memory. My drama would have ended magnificently.

But I am not living under threat; I have not been dragged to earth. Pierre de l'Estoile wrote this page of his journal the day after the assassination of Henri IV:

*‘And here I finish, with the life of my King (Henry IV), the second book of my melancholy history and my vain and curious researches, public as well as private, often interrupted for a month at a time by the sad evenings and weary nights I have endured, especially this last, because of the death of my King.*

*I would have proposed to end my ephemerides with this book; but so many new and curious occurrences have presented themselves because of that notable event, that I am continuing with another, which will be as lengthy as God pleases; and I doubt that will be very long.’*

L’Estoile saw the death of the first Bourbon; I have just seen the fall of the last; should I not close here the register of *my melancholy history and my vain and curious researches*? Perhaps; *but so many new and curious occurrences have presented themselves because of that notable event, that I am continuing with another.*

Like L’Estoile, I lament the misfortunes of Saint-Louis’ line; yet, I must confess, there is a certain internal satisfaction mixed with my sadness; I reproach myself for it, but cannot avoid it: the satisfaction is that of a slave freed from his chains. When I quit being a soldier and a traveller, I felt sad; now I experience joy, a convict liberated as I am from the galleys of society and Court. Faithful to my principles and my oath, I have betrayed neither liberty nor the King; I carry away neither riches nor honor; I leave as poor as when I came. Happy to end a political career hateful to me, I return with delight to rest.

Bless you, my dear in-born freedom; the soul of my life! Come: recount to me my *Memoirs*, this *alter ego* whose confidante, ideal and Muse you are. Hours of leisure are suited to tales: shipwrecked, I will continue to tell the fishermen on shore of my disaster. Returned to my first feelings, I become again a free man and a traveller; I end my course as I began. The circle of my days, which closes, leads me back to my point of departure. On the road that I once trod as a carefree conscript I will march as an experienced veteran, demobilization papers in my shako, stripes showing how long I have served on my arm, a haversack of years on my back. Who knows? Perhaps I will discover stage by stage the reveries of my youth? I will summon many dreams to my aid, to defend myself against that horde of realities which breeds in time past, like dragons hidden amongst the ruins. It is for me to tie together the two ends of my

existence, to confound distant epochs, to intermingle the illusions of differing times, since the banished Prince I will meet on leaving my paternal hearth, I encounter now in exile in travelling to my last home.

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 2

The trial of the Ministers – Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois – The pillaging of the arch-diocese

Paris, April 1831.

I wrote that little introduction to this section of my *Memoirs* rapidly, in October last year; but could not continue the work because I had another in hand; it involved finishing the book which ends the edition of my *Complete Works*. I was even distracted from that work, firstly by the trial of the Ministers, then by the sacking of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.

The trial of the Ministers and the troubles in Paris were no great thing to me: after the trial of Louis XVI and the revolutionary insurrections, every other judgement and insurrection seemed trivial indeed. The Ministers, brought from Vincennes to hear their sentence pronounced, arrived via the Rue d'Enfer. From the depths of my retreat I heard the sound of their carriage. What events have taken place outside my door! The men's defence lawyers were not up to the job. No one took the thing seriously enough: the prosecutor over-dominated the proceedings. If my friend the Prince de Polignac had selected me as his second, how I would have glared at those oath-breakers set up as judges over an oath-breaker: *'What,' I would have said to them, 'do you dare to be my client's judges! You are the ones who, tarnished utterly by your oaths, dared to make him commit the crime of ruining his master while thinking he was serving him; you the provokers of it; you who urged him to present the decrees! Change places with him whom you pretend to judge: from accused he shall become accuser. If we have merited punishment, it is not from you; if we are guilty, it is not towards you, but towards the people: they wait for us in the courtyard of your palace, and we will let them have our heads.'*

After the trial of the Ministers came the scandalous affair of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. The Royalists, full of excellent qualities, but sometimes foolish and often provocative, never considering the consequences of their actions, always thinking to re-establish the Legitimacy by choosing to wear a colored cravat or a flower in their buttonhole, caused deplorable scenes. It was evident that the revolutionary party would profit from the church service marking the anniversary of the Duc de Berry's death to make trouble; now, the Legitimists were not strong enough to oppose them, and the government was not well enough established to maintain order; also the church itself was vandalized. An apothecary, a man of progress, and follower of Voltaire bravely conquered a steeple from 1300, and a cross which had already been pulled down by other Barbarians towards the end of the ninth century.

The devastation of the arch-diocese, the profanation of holy things and processions imitating those in Lyons followed the noble deeds of this enlightened pharmacist. They lacked the tumbrels full of victims; but they had Punch, maskers, and all the delights of the carnival. The procession, sacrilegiously burlesqued, travelled along one bank of the Seine while the National Guard marched down the other, apparently hastening to its aid. The river separated order and anarchy. I am told that a wit looking on, seeing the books and chasubles floating in the Seine, said; *'What a pity they didn't throw the archbishop in too!'* A profound comment, indeed, since an archbishop drowning would have been fun to watch: it would have been a great stride towards liberty and enlightenment! We, ancient witnesses of ancient events, are forced to tell you that you see here only pale and miserable imitations. You still possess the revolutionary instinct; but you lack the energy for it; you are only criminals in imagination; you wish to

do evil, but your hearts lack courage and your arms strength; you would see other massacres, but you will not set your hands to the work. If you want the July Revolution to be great and remain great, do not treat Monsieur Cadet de Gassicourt as a true hero, or Mayeux as imaginary.



## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 3

#### My pamphlet on The Restoration and the Elective Monarchy

Paris, End of March 1831.

I was far from correct in thinking that by leaving the July days behind me I would be entering a realm of peace. The fall of three sovereigns obliged me to justify myself to the Chamber of Peers. The proscription of those kings did not allow me to remain silent. From another direction, Philippe's newspapers demanded to know why I had refused to serve a revolution which had consecrated the principles I propagated and defended. I was forced to utter universal truths and explain my personal conduct. An extract from a little pamphlet which was wasted (*De la Restauration et de la Monarchie électorale*) will continue the thread of my story and that of the history of my times:

*'Stripped of the present, and having only an uncertain future this side of the tomb, it is important that my memory is not harmed by my silence. I ought not to be reticent about a Restoration in which I played so great a part, which is insulted every day, and which was finally proscribed before my eyes. In the Middle Ages, in times of disaster, they imprisoned a churchman in a tower where he lived on bread and water for the good of the people. I bear a fair resemblance to that twelfth century monk: through the skylight of my expiatory cell, I preached my last sermon to the passers-by. Here is the gist of that sermon; I foreshadowed it in my last speech at the rostrum of the Chamber of Peers: the July Monarchy has to be in a state of utter glory or one of laws of 'exception'; it lives and dies by the Press; without glory it will be devoured by liberty; if it attacks that liberty, it will perish. It would be a fine thing to see us, after we chased three kings beyond the barricades to win Press freedom, raising new barricades against that freedom! And yet, what else is there to do? Will the redoubled action of the tribunes and the laws suffice to contain the writers? A new government is a child that cannot walk without support. Shall we return the nation to its swaddling clothes? Can the dreadful infant that sucked blood, while held in the arms of victory in so many bivouacs, not throw them off? Only an old tree-stump rooted deeply in the past can brave with impunity the storms of liberty and the Press...*

*'To hear the proclamations these days, one would think the exiles in Edinburgh were the nicest people in the world, and had never done anything wrong. Today, the present is lacking only one thing: the past, a small matter! As though the centuries were not resting on one another and the last one to arrive could hang there in mid-air! Our pride has to be shocked by the memories, erasing of the fleur-de-lis, proscribing of the people and names, that family, heir of a thousand years, has left an immense void by its removal: it is felt everywhere. Those individuals, so weak in our eyes, have weakened Europe by their fall. If events ever produce their natural effects, and lead to serious consequences, then Charles X in abdicating will have taken with him in his abdication all the Gothic kings, the great vassals of the past in suzerainty to the Capets...*

*'We are marching towards universal revolution. If the transformation which is taking place follows its course and meets with no obstacles, if popular understanding continues its progressive development, if the education of the middle classes is not interrupted, the nations will achieve an equal level of freedom; if that transformation is halted, the nations will achieve an equal level of tyranny. The tyranny will not*

*last, because of the advance of enlightenment in this age, but it will be harsh, and a lengthy period of social dissolution will follow.*

*‘Preoccupied as I am with these ideas, one can see why I have remained faithful, as an individual, to what would seem to best safeguard public freedoms, the least perilous path by which we might achieve the remainder of those freedoms.*

*‘It is not that I wish to be a whining prophet of sentimental politics, sporting the white feather and reiterating the commonplaces of Henri IV’s age. Traversing with my eyes the space which separates the tower of the Temple from the Palace in Edinburgh I would find, doubtless, as many heaped-up calamities as there are centuries accumulated by a noble race. A grieving woman above all was charged with the heaviest burden, and the greatest; there is not a heart which does not break on remembering her: her sufferings mounted so high they became one of the grandeurs of the Revolution. But in the end one is not forced to be a king. Providence sends personal afflictions to whom it wishes, always brief because life itself is short; and those afflictions hardly count in the general destiny of nations...*

*‘But the proposition that banishing the deposed family forever from French territory is a corollary to deposing that family, that corollary does not hold conviction with me. It would be pointless for me to seek a place among the various categories of people who are attached to the present order of things...*

*‘There are men, who, after preaching sermons to the one and indivisible Republic, to the Directory of five persons, to the Consulate of three, to the Empire of one alone, to the first Restoration, the Act additional to the Imperial constitution, and the second Restoration, still have something left to utter regarding Louis-Philippe: I am not that well-stocked.*

*‘There are men who broke their word on the Place de Grève, in July, like those Roman knights who play at odd or even, among the ruins: they consider anyone who does not reduce politics to private interest as a fool and a madman: I am a fool and a madman.*

*‘There are timorous people who would have preferred not to take the oath, but who imagined themselves, their grandparents, their grandchildren and all property owners murdered if they did not stutter it out: that is a physical infirmity which I have not yet experienced; I will wait, and if it afflicts me, I will tell you.*

*‘There are great lords of the Empire, tied to their pensions by sacred and indissoluble bonds, whoever’s hands they themselves might fall into: a pension is a sacrament in their eyes; it is stamped with the cachet of priesthood or marriage; no pensioned head can cease to be: pensions being in the care of the Treasury, they remain in the care of that same Treasury: I make it a habit to divorce myself from fortune; too old for her, I desert her, for fear lest she will not leave me.*

*‘There are noble Barons of the Throne and Altar, who did not betray the decrees; no, but the inadequate means employed to execute those decrees heated their bile; indignant that tyranny had failed, they went to seek another ante-chamber: it is impossible for me to share their indignation and their hearth.*

*‘There are men of conscience who were only oath-breakers in breaking their oath, who having yielded to force are nevertheless on the side of right; they wept for poor Charles X, whom they had first led to his doom with their advice, and then put to death according to their oath; but if ever he or his race return,*

*they will be warriors of the Legitimacy: I have always been devoted to death, and I am the whole cortege of the old monarchy as his dog is a poor man's.*

*'Finally there are the loyal knights who in their pockets keep dispensations of honor and permits for disloyalty: I am not one of them.*

*'I was a man of the potential Restoration, the Restoration of all kinds of freedom. That Restoration took me for an enemy; it is gone: I must submit to its fate. Should I attach the few years left to me to a new fortune, like the hems of those robes that women trail from place to place, and on which all the world may tread? As the leader of the younger generation, I would be suspect; to follow them is not my role. I know very well that none of my faculties have aged; I understand my century better than ever; I penetrate the future more boldly than anyone; but fate has made its pronouncement; to end one's life fittingly is an essential task for a public man.'*

BOOK XXXIV  
CHAPTER 4  
The Études Historiques

Finally, my *Études Historiques* have appeared; I record the *Foreword* here: it is a true page of my *Memoirs*; it continues my story to the moment when I wrote it:

‘FOREWORD

*‘Remember, in order not to lose sight of the world’s course, that at that epoch (the fall of the Roman Empire)... there were citizens who like me searched the archives of the past in the midst of present ruins, who wrote the annals of ancient revolutions to the sound of new ones; they and I took for a table, in the crumbling edifice, the stone fallen at our feet, while awaiting that which would crush our skulls.’*

*(Études Historique, Book Vb, page 175)*

‘In what remains to me of life, I would not wish to re-live the eighteen months which have just passed. No one has any idea of the violence done to me; I have been forced to remain mentally detached for ten, twelve or fifteen hours a day, detached from everything happening around me, in order to give myself simply to the composition of a work of which no one will read a single line. Who will read four fat volumes, when they have enough trouble reading the pages of a newspaper? I was writing ancient history, and modern history knocked at my door: in vain I called out to it: “*Wait, I will come to you*”; it passed by to the sound of cannon, carrying away with it three generations of kings.

‘And how happily the times suited the very nature of those *Studies*! They pulled down crosses, they pursued priests; and the pages of my tale were a matter of crosses and priests; they banished Capets, and I am publishing a history eight centuries of which is concerned with Capets. The longest and final work of my life, that which has cost me most research, care and time, that in which I have aired perhaps the largest number of facts and ideas, appears when it would find no readers; it is as if I had thrown it into a well where it will sink between the heap of rubble following it. When a society makes and unmakes itself, when the life of one and all goes into it, when one is not sure of the future for a moment, then who cares what his neighbor does, thinks, or says? Do Nero, Constantine, Julian, the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Church Fathers, the Goths, the Huns, the Vandals, the Franks, Clovis, Charlemagne, Hugh Capet and Henri IV really matter; do the problems of the ancient world really matter, when we are concerned with the problems of the modern one? Is it not a sort of wool-gathering, a sort of feebleness of mind to occupy oneself with literature at such a moment? True: but this wool-gathering has nothing to do with my brain, it has its antecedents in my wretched poverty. If I had not made so many sacrifices for my country’s liberty, I would not have been obliged to enter into contracts which have had to be fulfilled in circumstances doubly deplorable to me. No author has suffered a like experience; God be thanked, it is over: I no longer have to sit amongst the ruins despising a life which I disdained to follow in my youth.

‘After these quite natural complaints, which escape me involuntarily, a thought comes to console me; I began my literary career with a work in which I envisaged Christianity in the context of philosophy and history: I began my political career with the Restoration, I finished it with the Restoration. It is not without a secret satisfaction that I find myself so in accord with myself.’

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 5

Before my departure from Paris

Paris, April 1831.

I have never abandoned the resolution I conceived at the time of the July troubles. I am pre-occupied with obtaining the means of living in a foreign country, means difficult to obtain, since I have none. The editor who acquired my works has nearly bankrupted me, and my debts force me to seek someone who will make me a loan.

Whatever happens, I am going to Geneva with the money owing to me from the sale of my last pamphlet (*De la Restauration et de la Monarchie électorale*), I leave my proxy to sell the house, in which I write this page, in short order. If I find a shopkeeper in my bed, I can find another bed outside France. Among these uncertainties and upheavals, until I am established somewhere, it will be impossible for me to pick up the tale of my *Memoirs* from the point at which I interrupted them. (This relates to my literary career and my political career, both left behind, lacunas which are now filled by what I have just written in recent years, 1838 and 1839. Paris: *Note*, 1839) I will still continue to write about the current events in my life; I will document these events by means of the letters I happen to write on the road or during my various halts; I will tie in intervening facts by means of a journal which will fill in the missing time between the dates of these letters.

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 6

Letters and verses to Madame Récamier

TO MADAME RÉCAMIER

*‘Lyons, Wednesday the 18th of May 1831.*

*Here I am, too far from you. I have never made so sad a journey: admirable weather, nature all adorned, nightingales singing, a starry night: and all for what? I should return to where you are, unless you can come to my aid.’*

*‘Lyons, Friday the 20th of May.*

*I spent yesterday wandering along the banks of the Rhône; I gazed at the city where you were born, the hill where the convent rises in which you were chosen as the most beautiful: a prediction which you have not disappointed; and you are not here, and years have rolled by, and you have long been exiled from your cradle, and Madame de Staël is no more, and I am leaving France! Only one person of former times has contacted me: I am sending you his note because it was an unexpected surprise. This person, whom I have never met, plants pines on the hills of the Lyonnais. It is a far cry from there to the Rue Feydeau and ‘A House for Sale’: how roles alter on this earth!*

*Hyacinthe has sent me letters of regret and newspaper articles: I place no value on all that. You know I believe that, sincerely, twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four; the twenty-fourth is consecrated to vanity, but it scarcely takes root, and soon passes. I have seen no one here; Monsieur Thiers, who is travelling in the south, knocked on my door.’*

Note included with this letter.

*‘A neighbor, your compatriot, who has no other claim on you than a profound admiration for your fine talent and your admirable character, would appreciate the honor of meeting you and presenting his respectful homage. This neighbor in your hotel, this compatriot, is named Elleviou.’*

*‘Lyons, Sunday the 22nd of May.*

*We leave tomorrow for Geneva where I will find so many remembrances of you. Will I ever see France again once I have crossed the frontier? Yes, if you desire it: that is to say, if you are still there. I do not wish for events which would offer me a chance to return; I would never include misfortune for my country as one of my hopes. I will write to you on Tuesday the 24th from Geneva. When will I see your delicate handwriting again younger sister of mine?’*

*‘Geneva, Tuesday the 24th of May.*

*Having arrived here yesterday, we are looking for a house. It is probable that we will take a little detached residence down by the lake. I cannot tell you how sad I am making these arrangements. Yet another future! Beginning again a life I thought was over! I count on writing you a long letter when I*

*have a little peace; I fear that peace, since then I shall gaze without distractions at those shadowy years which I am entering with a heavy heart.'*

*'9th of June 1831.*

*You know there is a reformed sect which has been established among the Protestants. One of the new pastors of this new Church came to see me and has written me two letters worthy of the original apostles. He wants to convert me to his faith, and I want to make a papist of him. We joust as in Calvin's day, while loving each other in Christian brotherhood, and without burning each other. I do not despair of saving him; he is quite weakened by my arguments in favor of the Popes. You cannot imagine the heights of exaltation he achieves, and his frankness is admirable. If you arrive, accompanied by my old friend Ballanche, we will do marvels. One of the Geneva newspapers is advertising a controversial Protestant work. The authors have been urged to stand firm because the author of Le Génie du Christianisme is in the neighborhood.*

*There is something consoling at finding a little tribe of free people, governed by the most distinguished men and in which religious ideas form the basis of liberty and the first concern of existence.*

*I have dined with Monsieur de Constant and Madame Necker, unfortunately quite deaf, but a rare woman, of the greatest distinction; we spoke only of you. I have received your letter, and told Monsieur de Sismondi of the kind things you said about him. You see I am learning from you.*

*Finally, here is some verse. You are my star therein, and I am waiting for you so that I can leave for that enchanted isle.*

*Delphine is married: O Muses! I told you in my last letter why I could not write about the Peerage or the war; I would be attacking an ignoble corps of which I was part, and I would be preaching honor to those who no longer possess any.*

*You need to be a sailor to read these lines and understand them. I recommend them to Monsieur Lenormant. Your intellect will enjoy the last three verses, and the explanation of the riddle is in the dedication at the end.'*

### THE SHIPWRECK

*Repulsed by the north wind, aground on the sands,  
Shattered old vessel that will ride the waves no more,  
One the cruel carpenter, pitiless Death, demands  
Be cut to pieces on the shore!*

*On your deserted deck's a sentinel's lonely form:  
On your fo'c's'le, in the past, you've seen him,  
Impatient for the reefs, for sudden storms,  
And whistling aloud to rouse the wind.*

*Then on your bowsprit, a daring cavalier,  
He laughed, as plunging through the breakers*

*You leapt: and then from the masthead there,  
He called: 'Land ahoy' to the sailors!*

*Now, holed-up in your worn out hull, alas,  
Sunburnt, white-haired, tarred hands, eyes blue-green,  
The broken compass, the almost empty hourglass,  
Proclaim the hermit of the seas.*

*You thought to end moored beside the shore  
Old vessel, old Captain! Both were wrong:  
The hurricane seized you, set you drifting far,  
Howling, dark and azure waves among.*

*The first reef will set a bound to your course,  
And halt you; suddenly your sides half-breached;  
You sink! And all is over! Your anchor, flawed,  
Slides, ploughing vainly through the deep.*

*That vessel is my life, the Captain, it is I:  
I am rescued! And my days at sea are done:  
A star I love has revealed to me its light,  
Now, when other stars are gone.*

*That evening fire, that dissolves the storm,  
And bears, so brightly, the name of beauty,  
Carries my wreckage over deeps now calm,  
To some enchanted island's mystery.*

*To my final harbor, sweet and gentle Star,  
Your rays I'll follow, ever fresh and pure;  
And when you cease to light my sails, afar,  
You'll shine on my tomb evermore.*

*TO MADAME RÉCAMIER*

*'Geneva, the 18th of June 1831.*

*You have received all my letters. I wait constantly for some word from you; I know quite well that I will find nothing, but I am always surprised when the post only brings me newspapers. No one writes to me but you; no one remembers me but you, and that is very charming. I love your solitary letters which do not arrive as they did in the times of my greatness, in the midst of packets of dispatches and all the letters of support, admiration and fawning which vanish with fortune. After your little letters I will see your lovely self if I do not go to meet it. You will be my testamentary executor; you will sell my humble retreat; the proceeds will allow you to travel to find the sun. At the moment it is admirable weather: while writing to you, I can see Mont Blanc in its splendor; from the summit of Mont Blanc one can see the Apennines: it seems to me that I am only three paces from Rome where we shall go, since everything in France will be arranged.*



*It only needed our glorious country, having passed through all her miseries, to be governed by cowards; she is: and the young have been swallowed up by doctrine, literature, or debauchery, according to their individual characters. The course of events remains; but when one drags oneself along the road of life as I have done, the most probable event is the end of the journey.*

*I do not work, I can do nothing: I am bored; it is my nature, and I am like a fish in water: yet if the water was a little less deep, I would perhaps please myself more.'*

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 7

My journal for 12th July to 1st September 1831 – Monsieur de Lapanouze's clerks – Lord Byron –  
Ferne y and Voltaire

*At Pâquis, near Geneva*

I have taken up residence in Pâquis with Madame de Chateaubriand; I have made the acquaintance of Monsieur Rigaud, the leading syndic of Geneva: above his house, on the edge of the lake, while climbing the road to Lausanne, you find a villa, belonging to two clerks of Monsieur de Lapanouze's, who spent 1,500,000 francs having it built and the gardens planted out. When I passed their house on foot, I admired that Providence which had set us all down in Geneva as witnesses to the Restoration. What a fool I am! What a fool! The Lord of Lapanouze espoused royalism and misfortune as I did: see what has happened to his clerks for having supported the alteration in interest rates which I had the wisdom to combat, and in virtue of which I was hunted down. Regard these gentlemen; they arrive in an elegant Tilbury, hat over their ears, and I am obliged to fling myself into a ditch to avoid the wheel carrying away a section of my old frock-coat. Yet I have been a Peer of France, a Minister, and an Ambassador, and I have, in a cardboard box, all the premier orders of Christianity, including the Holy Spirit and the Golden Fleece. If Lord César de Lapanouze's clerks, millionaires, would like to buy my box of ribbons for their wives it would be a real pleasure to me.

Yet all is not roses for the Messieurs Bartholoni: they are not yet noblemen of Geneva, that is to say they are not of the second generation, and their mother still lives at the lower end of the city and has not climbed to the Saint-Pierre Quarter, Geneva's Faubourg Saint-Germain; but, God willing, nobility will follow wealth.

I visited Geneva for the first time in 1805, if two thousand years had passed between the dates of my two visits, could they seem further apart than they do? Geneva belonged to France; Bonaparte shone in all his glory, Madame de Staël in all hers; there was no more concern with the Bourbons than if they had never existed. And Bonaparte, Madame de Staël and the Bourbons, where are they? And I, I am still here!

Monsieur de Constant, a cousin of Benjamin Constant, and Mademoiselle de Constant, his elderly daughter, full of wit, virtue and talent, live in their cottage *Souterre* on the banks of the Rhône: they are overlooked by another country house once belonging to Monsieur de Constant: he sold it to the Princess Belgiojoso, an exile from Milan whom I saw pass like a pale flower amidst the dinner-party I gave in Rome for Grand Duchess Hélène.

During one of my trips on the water, an old boatman told me something that Lord Byron once did, he whose house is visible on the Savoy side of the lake. The noble peer waited for a storm to rise before setting out; from the edge of his bench he dived into the waves, and swam through the tempest to Bonivard's feudal prison: he was ever a man of action as well as a poet. I am not so original; I also love storms; but my involvements with them are private, and I have no confidence in boatmen.

Behind Ferne y, I discovered a narrow valley where a stream of water flows, seven or eight fingers deep; this brook bathes the roots of several willows, conceals itself here and there beneath patches of watercress and makes the bulrushes quiver on whose tops perch damsel flies with blue wings. Did that man who

lived to the sound of trumpets ever know this silent refuge opposite his echoing house? I doubt it. Well, the water is there! It still flows; I do not know its name; perhaps it has none: Voltaire's times are gone; only his fame still makes a little noise in a little corner of our little earth, like this rivulet which makes its self heard only a dozen or so feet from its edge.

People differ: I am charmed by that hidden channel; in sight of the Alps, a fern frond I have picked delights me; a whispering among the reeds makes me happy; a tiny insect which only I will see, which dives into some moss, as if into a vast solitude, draws my gaze and sets me dreaming. Private troubles exist there, which were unknown to that great genius who, not far from here, dressed like Orosmane, acted out his tragedies, wrote to the Princes of this world and forced Europe to come and admire him in the hamlet of Ferney. But were there not troubles there too? The transitions of the world are no more than the passage of these wavelets, and as for kings, I prefer my tiny ant.

One thing always astonishes me when I think of Voltaire: with a superior, clear and rational mind, he remained completely unmoved by Christianity; he never saw what others see: that the establishment of the Gospel, human relations alone considered, was the greatest revolution that could have taken place on earth. It is true to say that in Voltaire's century that thought never entered anyone's head. The theologians defended Christianity as an accomplished fact, as a truth founded in laws emanating from the spiritual and temporal authorities; the philosophers attacked it as an abuse perpetrated by priests and kings: no one progressed any further. I do not doubt that if one could have presented Voltaire suddenly with the other side of the question, his quick and lucid intelligence would have been struck by it: one blushes at the thin and narrow-minded manner in which he treated a subject that embraced nothing less than the transformation of nations, the introduction of a morality, a new social principle, a further human right, another order of ideas, a total change in the human race. Unfortunately the great writer who was lost in spreading his fatal ideas dragged many less powerful minds down with him: he resembles those ancient Oriental despots on whose tomb slaves were immolated.

How many famous people rushed to Ferney, where no one goes any more, to that Ferney around which I have just roamed in solitude! They rest, gathered together forever in the recesses of Voltaire's letters, their temple underground; the sighs of one century diminish by degrees and die away into the eternal silence just as the breathing of another begins to make itself heard.

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 8

My journal continued – Vain endeavors in Paris

*At Pâquis, near Geneva.*

Oh money, that I have scorned so greatly and cannot love as I should, I am forced to confess that you yet have some merit: source of freedom, you provide a thousand things in our existence, where everything is difficult without you! Except glory, what can you not procure? With you everything is beautiful, young, adored: we have esteem, honors, qualities, and virtues. You will tell me that with money we only have the semblance of all that: what does it matter if I think true what is false? Deceive me cleverly and I will quit you of the rest: is life anything other than a lie? When one has no money, one is dependent on everything and everybody. Two creatures who do not suit each other might go their own ways; well, lacking funds, they must sit there face to face sulking, muttering, in a sour mood, chewing their tongues with boredom, consuming their souls to the whites of their eyes, enraged, making a mutual sacrifice of their tastes, their desires, their in-born way of life: misery grips them both, and in these beggars' bonds, instead of embracing each other they bite each other, but not as Flora bit Pompey. Without money, there is no means of flight; one cannot go to find another dawn, and possessing a proud spirit, one bears everlasting chains. Happy you financiers, sellers of crucifixes, who govern Christendom today, who decide on peace or war, who eat like pigs on the proceeds of old clothes, who are the favorites of kings and beauties, foul and ugly as you are! Ah, if you could change places with me! If I could rummage a moment in your safes, take from you what you have stolen from the sons of the nobility, I would be the happiest of men!

I ought to have a fine means of subsistence: I could address myself to the monarchs; as I have lost everything on behalf of their crown, it would only be right for them to support me. But that idea which should strike them never does strike them; and strikes me even less. Rather than sitting at royal banquets, I would do better to take up that diet again which I followed in London with my poor friend Hingant. But the happy days of living in garrets are past, not that I would not be there again, but I would be ill at ease there, I would take up too much space with the trappings of my fame; I would no longer be there in my single shirt, with the slender waist of an unknown who has not dined. My cousin de La Bouëtardais is no longer there to play his violin on my pallet-bed in the red robe of a Councillor of the Breton Parliament, and keep warm at night clothed in a chair instead of a counterpane; Peltier is no longer there to give us dinner with King Christophe's money, and above all the magician is no longer there, Youth, who with a smile changes poverty into wealth, who brings you her younger sister Hope for a mistress; the latter as deceptive as her elder sister, but returning still when the former has fled forever.

I was forgetting the miseries of my first emigration and I imagined that it would be enough to quit France to maintain in peace the honor of exile: roasted skylarks only fall to those who harvest the fields not those who sow them: if it was merely a matter of myself in some alms-house, I would not mind; but Madame de Chateaubriand? So I felt quite uncertain in gazing at the future, anxiety gripped me.

I heard from Paris that my house in the Rue d'Enfer could only be sold at a price which was insufficient to cover the mortgage with which that hermitage was burdened: but something might yet be done if I were there. After this news, I made a useless journey to Paris, since I found neither goodwill nor purchaser; but I saw the Abbaye-aux-Bois again and some of my new friends. On the eve of my return there, I dined at

the Café de Paris with Messieurs Arago, Pougeville, Carrel and Béranger, all more or less discontented and disappointed with the *best of republics*.

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 9

My journal continued – Messieurs Carrel and Béranger

*At Pâquis, near Geneva, the 26th of September 1831.*

My *Études Historiques* led to a relationship with Monsieur Carrel, as it likewise brought about my meeting Messieurs Thiers and Mignet. I had reproduced, in the preface to my *Études*, a fairly lengthy passage from Monsieur Carrell's *Catalonian War*, this paragraph in particular: *'Events, in their continual and fatal transformations, do not drag all minds along with them; they do not influence every character with equal facility; they do not even take account of all interests; that is what we must understand, and we must forgive something in those protests that are made in support of the past. When an age is over, the mold is broken, and it suffices Providence that it cannot be re-made; but there is sometimes a beauty to be beheld in the ruins left behind on earth.'*

After these fine words, I added this summary myself: *'The man who could write these words has something in sympathy with those who have faith in Providence, who respect past religion, and who have also gazed at ruins.'*

Monsieur Carrel thanked me. He was at that time the genius and spirit of the *National*, on which he labored with Messieurs Thiers and Mignet. Monsieur Carrel belonged to a pious royalist family of Rouen; the Legitimacy, short-sighted and rarely capable of distinguishing worth, misjudged Monsieur Carrell. Proud and aware of his own value, he took refuge in generous opinions, in which one finds a compensation for the sacrifices one imposes on oneself: what happens to all characters fit for great things, happened to him. When unforeseen circumstances oblige them to restrict themselves to a narrow circle, they consume their super-abundant talents in efforts which surpass the opinions and events of their day. Before revolutions, superior men die unknown: their public has not yet arrived; after revolutions, superior men die abandoned: their public has slipped away.

Monsieur Carrel was unfortunate; nothing was more practical than his ideas, nothing more romantic than his life. A Republican volunteer in Spain in 1823, captured on the battlefield, condemned to death by the French authorities, escaping from a thousand perils, love became enmeshed with the problems of his private existence. It required him to defend the passion which sustained his life, and that man of feeling, always ready to throw himself on the point of a sword in broad daylight, went to find the portal and shadows of night, he walks those silent fields with a beloved woman, at first light, when they beat the reveille to summon an attack on the enemy.

I leave Monsieur Carrel behind to say a few words about our celebrated song-writer. You will find my account is too brief, Reader, but I crave your indulgence: his name and his songs must be engraved in your memory.

Monsieur de Béranger is not obliged to hide his love, as Monsieur Carrell was. Having sung of liberty and the people's virtues while braving the prisons of kings, he set his love down in a couplet, and, behold, the immortal *Lisette*.

Near the Barrière des Martyrs, below Montmartre, you will find the Rue de la Tour-d'Auvergne. In that street, half-built, half-paved, in a little house hidden behind a tiny garden and suited to the size of present-day incomes, you will find the famous song-writer. A bald head, a somewhat rustic air, though neat and pleasant, proclaims the poet. I rest my eyes with delight on that plebeian figure, having seen so many visages of kings; I compare those vastly different types: on the royal brow one sees something of an elevated nature, but wrinkled, powerless, worn; on the democratic face common physical traits appear, but one acknowledges a lofty intellectual character: the royal brow has lost its crown; the commoner's brow awaits one.

One day I begged Béranger (he will forgive me for associating myself with his fame), to show me one of his unknown works: *'Did you know,'* he said, *'I began as one of your disciples? I was mad about Le Génie du Christianisme and I wrote Christian idylls; they were scenes with country priests, pictures of religion in villages at harvest-time.'*

Monsieur Augustin Thierry told me that the Battle of the Franks in *Les Martyrs* had given him the idea of a new way of writing history: nothing has flattered me more than to discover the influence of my works on the careers of the historian Thierry and the poet Béranger.

Our song-writer has the varied qualities that Voltaire demanded of song: *'In order to succeed with these little efforts,'* declared the author of so much graceful poetry, *'there must be subtlety and sentiment in the soul, harmony in the spirit, nothing too high, or low, and knowledge of how to be brief.'*

Béranger has several *Muses*, all charming, and though those *Muses* are women, he loves them all. When he is betrayed, he makes no attempt at elegy: and yet there is feeling of pious sadness at the heart of his gaiety: it is a serious face that smiles; it is philosophy praying.

My friendship for Béranger earned me much astonishment on the part of what was called my party; an old Knight of Saint Louis, who is unknown to me, wrote from the recesses of his turret: *'Rejoice, Monsieur, in being praised by one who has insulted your King and your God.'* Very good, my fine gentleman! You are a poet too.

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 10

A song of Béranger's: and my reply – A return to Paris for Briqueville's proposal

During the dinner at the Café de Paris which I have just mentioned to you, Monsieur de Béranger sang me the admirable song published as:

*‘Chateaubriand, why then flee your country,  
Fleeing her love, our incense and our care?’*

This verse about the Bourbons caught people's attention:

*‘And would you free yourself from their fall!  
Then know more of their foolish vanity:  
Among the ills, they blame even Heaven for,  
Their ungrateful hearts place your loyalty.’*

I replied from Switzerland to this song which partakes of the history of our times, in a letter which is printed at the start of my pamphlet regarding Briqueville's proposal. I told the songwriter: *‘From the place where I am writing, Sir, I can see the country house where Lord Byron lived and the roofs of Madame de Staël's chateau. Where is the bard of Childe Harold? Where is the authoress of Corinne? My over-long life resembles those Roman roads bordered by funeral monuments.’*

I returned to Geneva; I then conducted Madame de Chateaubriand to Paris, and brought back the manuscript countering Briqueville's proposal regarding the banishment of the Bourbons, a proposal considered at the session of the Deputies held on the 17th of September of this year: some link their lives to success, others to misfortune.



## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 11

Baude and Briqueville's proposal regarding the banishment of the elder branch of the Bourbons

Paris, Rue d'Enfer, the end of November 1831

Returning to Paris on the 16th of October, I published my pamphlet towards the end of that same month; it was entitled: *On the new proposal regarding the banishment of Charles X and his family, or a sequel to my last work: On the Restoration and the Elective Monarchy.*

When these posthumous *Memoirs* appear, will the daily polemics, the events people are so impassioned about at the present moment, the opponents I am fighting against, even the act banishing Charles X and his family, count for anything at all? That is the trouble with all journals: therein lie animated discussions of topics which have ceased to be of interest; the reader sees a crowd of people pass by like shadows, whose names will not even be remembered: silent extras who fill up the background to the scene. Yet it is in these dry sections of chronicles that you find the observations on, and the facts of, the history of men and mankind.

At the beginning of the pamphlet I placed the decrees, first of all, proposed in succession by Messieurs Baude and Briqueville. Having examined the five courses of action that were to be taken after the July Revolution, I wrote:

*'The worst period we have been through seems that which we are now in, since anarchy reigns in the spheres of reason, morality and intellect. The existence of nations is longer than that of individuals: a paralyzed man sometimes lies stretched out on his couch for several years before he vanishes; a sick nation lies in its bed for a long time before expiring. What the new monarchy needs is speed, youth, daring, the turning of one's back on the past, marching alongside France to a meeting with the future.*

*Yet it comes offering no cure; it is presented, thin and ill, by the doctors who are treating it. It arrives pitiful and empty-handed, having nothing to give, and everything to receive, displaying its poverty, begging alms of everyone, and yet on the attack, declaiming against the Legitimacy and aping the Legitimacy, against Republicanism and yet trembling before it. This heavily-bandaged system only sees enemies in the twin oppositions it threatens. As supporters it has raised a phalanx of re-employed veterans: if they wore as many stripes on their sleeves as the oaths they have sworn, they would have arms more gaudily colored than the Montmorency livery.*

*I doubt whether Freedom will long be pleased with this hotchpotch of a domestic monarchy. The Franks located Freedom, in a camp; she maintained among their descendants their love and desire for that first cradle; like ancient royalty, she wishes to be lifted high on a shield, and her deputies are soldiers.'*

From that argument I pass to the details of the policy followed in our external relations. The immense mistake of the Congress of Vienna was to have placed a military country like France in a state of enforced hostility with the nations of the Rhine. I show all that the foreigners acquired in territory and power, all that we might have taken back in July. A fine lesson! A striking proof of the vanity of military glory and the works of conquerors! If one made a list of the Princes who have added to French possessions, Bonaparte would not figure there; Charles X would occupy a remarkable place!

Passing from item to item, I arrive at Louis-Philippe: ‘*Louis-Philippe is King,*’ I write, ‘*he bears the scepter for a child whose immediate heir he is, for that pupil whom Charles X has placed in the hands of the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, as in those of an experienced tutor, a loyal guardian, a generous protector. In that Château of the Tuileries, instead of an innocent couch, free of insomnia, rid of remorse, devoid of ghosts, what has the Prince found? An empty throne which reveals to him a headless spectre carrying another specter’s head in its blood-stained hand...*

*Must he end by setting up Louvel’s blade in law, before striking a final blow at the proscribed family? If it is driven to these shores by a tempest; if, being too young as yet, Henri is not old enough for the scaffold, well, you are the masters, grant him an exemption to that age-limit on the death-penalty.’*

Having spoken about the government of France, I returned to Holyrood and added: ‘*May I take, respectfully, in finishing, the liberty of addressing a few words to the exiles? They have re-entered grief as if it were their mother’s womb: misfortune, a seduction I have barely been able to protect myself from, always seems to me to be in the right; I am afraid to bless its sacred authority, and the majesty which adds to their insulted grandeur which will now have only me to flatter it. But I will overcome my weakness; I will force myself to speak a language which, in days of misfortune, may prepare the way for my country’s hopes.*

*A Prince’s education should be suited to the form of government and the way of life of his country. Now, in France there is no longer any chivalry, no knights, no soldiers of the Oriflamme, no gentlemen cased in steel, ready to march behind the white banner. There is a nation which is no longer the nation of former times, a nation which, altering through the centuries, no longer possesses the old habits and antique way of life of its forefathers. Whether one deplores, or glories in, those social transformations, one must accept the nation as it is, events as they are, and enter into the spirit of the age, in order to affect that spirit.*

*All is in God’s hand, except the past which, once fallen from that potent hand, never returns to it.*

*The moment will certainly arrive when that orphan will leave the castle of the Stuarts, a sanctuary of ill omen, which seems to cast its fatal shadow over his youth: the last born descendant of the Béarnais must mix with the children of his own century, attend public schools, and understand everything which is now known. Let him become the most enlightened young man of his times; let him grasp the science of his era; let him join to the virtues of a Christian of the age of Saint-Louis the enlightenment of a Christian of our age. Let travel teach him about law and morality; let him traverse the oceans, comparing institutions and governments, free nations and nations enslaved; let him, if the occasion arises abroad, be a plain soldier exposing himself to the perils of war, since one is not suited to rule the French unless one has heard bullets flying. Then we will have done for him what humanly speaking can be done for him. But above all avoid nourishing in him the idea of divine right; far from encouraging him to mount to the level of his ancestors, prepare him never to ascend to it; raise him to be a man, not a king: that is the best path.*

*Enough; whatever God’s counsel may be, the recipient of my tender and pious loyalty, possesses the majesty of centuries that men cannot take from him. A thousand years placed on his young head adorn him always with pomp above all monarchs. If in private life he wears that coronet of years, memories and glory, if his hand lifts effortlessly that spectre of the centuries that produced his ancestors what empire has he need to regret?’*

Monsieur le Comte de Briqueville, whom I contested the proposal with in this way, had printed various reflections on my pamphlet; he sent them to me with this note:

Sir,

*I have yielded to the need, to the duty, of publishing the reflections which your eloquent pages on my proposal roused in my mind. I obey a sentiment no less real in deploring my finding myself in opposition to you, Sir, you who, to the power of genius, add so many titles to public consideration. The country is in danger, and I cannot therefore believe there is any longer serious disagreement between us: France invites us to unite to save her; aid her with your genius; our maneuvers will aid her with our weapons. On that field, Sir, is it not true that we will soon achieve an understanding? You will be the Tyrtaeus of a nation whose soldiers we are, and it will be a joy to me to proclaim myself then the most ardent of your political supporters, as I am already the sincerest.*

*Your very humble and obedient servant,*

*Le Comte Armand de BRIQUEVILLE.*

Paris, 15th of November 1831.'

I did not remain in my tent, and broke a second lance *courtoise* against the champion.

*'Paris, this 15th of November 1831.*

Sir,

*Your letter is worthy of a gentleman: forgive me this ancient word befitting your name, your courage and your love of France. Like you I detest a foreign yoke: if it is a question of defending my country, I will not ask to carry a poet's lyre, rather a veteran's sword in the ranks of your soldiers.*

*I have not yet read your reflections, Sir; but if the political situation leads you to withdraw your proposition which has greatly disturbed me, with what joy I would meet you, without reservation, on the field of freedom, of honor and of the glory of our country!*

*I have the honor to be, Sir, with the most distinguished consideration, your very humble and obedient servant,*

*CHATEAUBRIAND'*

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 12

A letter to the author of *Nemesis*

Paris, Rue d'Enfer, *The Infirmary of Marie-Thérèse*, December 1831

A poet, mingling the censures of the *Muse* with those of the laws, in a vigorous improvisation, attacked the widow and the orphan. As the verses were those of a writer of talent they acquired a kind of authority which did not allow me to let them pass: I turned to face another enemy. (Monsieur Barthélemy has since adopted the center-ground, not perhaps without imprecations from many people who rallied around, only a little too late. Note: Paris, 1837)

You cannot understand my reply without reading the poet's libel; I invite you to cast your eyes over those lines; they are very fine and they are found everywhere. My reply has not previously been published: it appears for the first time in these *Memoirs*. Wretched wrangling that follows revolutions! See what disputes we arrive at, we feeble successors to those men who, weapons in hand, dealt with the great questions of glory and freedom, while rousing the universe! Now Pygmies make their puny cries heard among the tombs of giants who are buried beneath the mountains they overturned upon themselves.

*'Paris, Wednesday evening, the 9th of November 1831*

Sir,

*I have received this morning the recent edition of Nemesis which you have done me the honor of sending to me. In order to avoid being seduced by those praises delivered with such splendor, grace and charm, I need to recall the barriers which exist between us. We live in separate worlds: our hopes and fears are not the same; you do not respect what I adore, and I do not respect what you adore. You have grown up, Sir, amidst the host of July abortions; but just as the influence you imagine my prose to have will not, according to you, revive a fallen race; likewise, according to me, all the power of your poetry will not diminish that noble race: are we not thus both faced with an impossible situation?*

*You are young, Sir, like that future you dream of and which deceives you; I am old like those times I dream of and which slip away from me. If you came to sit by my hearth, you say obligingly, you would reproduce my features with your burin: I would try hard to make you a Christian and a Royalist. Since your lyre, at the first chord from its strings, sings my Martyrs and my pilgrimage, why not complete the journey? Enter the holy place; time has only stolen some of my hair, as it strips a tree in winter, but there is still sap at the heart: I still have a firm enough hand to grasp the torch which might guide your steps beneath the arches of the sanctuary.*

*You claim, Sir, that a nation of poets is needed to understand my self-contradictions regarding extinct kingdoms and young republics: do you not also seek to celebrate liberty and yet find magnificent words for the tyrants who oppress it? You cite the Du Barrys, the Montespans, the Fontanges, the La Vallières; you recall royal weaknesses; but did those weaknesses cost France what the debauches of Danton and Camille Desmoulins cost her? The morals of those plebeian Catalines are reflected even in their language, they derived their metaphors from a pigsty of vileness and prostitution. Did the frailties of Louis XIV and Louis XV send fathers and husbands to the gibbet after dishonoring*

*their wives and daughters? Do baths of blood render the impudence of a revolutionary chaste, any more than baths of milk rendered virginal sullied Poppea? When Robespierre's second-hand dealers sought to sell the people of Paris the blood from Danton's tubs, as Nero's slaves sold the milk from his courtesan's warm baths, do you think there was some kind of virtue in the hand-rinsing of the Terror's obscene executioners?*

*The speed and elevation of flight of your Muse has deceived you, Sir: the sun who smiles on all misfortune will have struck a widow's weeds, and they will have seemed gilded to you: I have seen those weeds, they are mourning clothes; they know nothing of festivals; the child, in the womb that carried it, was lulled to the sound of tears alone; if he had danced for nine months in his mother's womb, as you write, he would only have felt joy before being born, between conception and childbirth, between the assassination and the proscription! The pallor of dreadful augury that you remarked on Henri's face is the result of a paternal blood-letting and not the weariness from some ball lasting two hundred and seventy nights. The ancient curse has been realized for that daughter of Henri IV: in dolore paries filios: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children. I see only the Goddess of Reason whose childbirths, quickened by adulterers, took up their places in the dance of death. From her exposed thighs foul reptiles emerged that danced, instantly, with the women knitting round the scaffold, to the sound of the blade, ascending and descending over and over, to the refrain of a devil's jig.*

*Ah, my dear Sir, I beg you, in the name of your rare talent, cease rewarding crime and punishing the unfortunate with sentences improvised by your Muse; do not consign the former to Heaven the latter to Hell. If while remaining attached to the cause of freedom and enlightenment you gave sanctuary to religion, humanity, and innocence, you would see in your vigils another kind of Nemesis appear, worthy of all earth's homage. Expecting you to pour all the ocean of your fresh ideas over virtue more effectively than I, continue, with the fury you have done, to expose our turpitudes to public contempt; overthrow the false monuments of a revolution which has built no temple appropriate to its religion; plough over their ruins with the blade of your satire; sow salt in that field to render it sterile, so that no more vileness can grow there. I recommend to you, Sir, above all, that crawling government that quivers with pride in submission, victory in defeat, and glories in our country's humiliation.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 13

#### The conspiracy of the Rue des Prouvaires

Paris, Rue d'Enfer, *the end of March*

The year 1831 ended for me in these travels and contests: as 1832 began there was further trouble.

The July Revolution had left the streets of Paris filled with a crowd of Swiss, with Bodyguards, with men of all stations dependent on the Court, now dying of hunger, whom fine monarchical minds, young and foolish beneath their grey hairs, thought to recruit to aid them.

In this tremendous plot, there was no lack of grave, pallid, thin, transparent, bowed personages, their faces noble, their eyes still flashing, and their hair white; this past world seemed like *Honor* revived in order to attempt to re-establish, with shadowy hands, a family it could not protect with its living ones. Often men with crutches try to prop up falling monarchies; but in this era of society, the restoration of a monument from the Middle Ages is impossible, because the spirit that animated that architecture is dead: one merely imitates the old while thinking to create the Gothic.

On the other side, the heroes of July, whom the happy-medium had robbed of a Republic, asked nothing better than to enter into an accord with the Carlists to take vengeance on a common enemy, even if it meant going on murdering after their victory. Monsieur Thiers having advocated the system of 1793 as a work of liberty, victory and genius, young minds were set alight at the flame of a fire of which they saw only a distant reflection; they were filled with the poetry of *the Terror*: a terrible and foolish parody which turns back the clock of freedom. It misjudges at the same time the age, history and humanity; it obliges the world to revert to the overseer's whip in order to save itself from the fanatics of the scaffold.

Money was needed to feed all these malcontents, heroes of July who had been dismissed or servants without places to go to: contributions were collected. Carlist and Republican discussions took place in every corner of Paris, and the police, in touch with everything, sent spies to preach equality and legitimacy from club to garret. I was told of this conduct which I opposed. The two parties wanted to declare me their leader in the moment of certain triumph: a Republican club asked me if I would accept the Presidency of the Republic; I replied: '*Yes, certainly; but only after Monsieur Lafayette*' which they found modest and fitting. General Lafayette sometimes visited Madame Recamier's; I poked a little fun at his *best of republics*: I asked him if he would not have been better to acknowledge Henri V and be the real President of France during the royal child's minority. He admitted it and took the pleasantries well, being good company. Every time we met, he said: '*Oh, you are going to quarrel with me again!*' I got him to admit that no one had ever tricked him more than his good friend Philippe.

In the midst of this disturbance and these extravagant conspiracies, a man arrived at my house, in disguise, a couch-grass wig on his occiput, green-glass spectacles on his nose, shading eyes which saw quite well without spectacles. He had pockets full of bills of exchange which he showed around; and immediately on being informed I wished to sell my house and settle my affairs, he offered me his services; I could not help laughing at this gentleman (a man of spirit and resource moreover) who considered himself obliged to buy me for the Legitimacy. His offers became too pressing, he saw on my lips a disdain which forced him to retreat, and he wrote my secretary this little note which I kept:

‘Sir,

*Yesterday evening I had the honor to meet Monsieur le Vicomte de Chateaubriand, who received me with his usual kindness; nevertheless I thought I noticed that he lacked his customary openness. Tell me, I beg you, what would re-establish his trust in me which I esteem more than everything; if he has heard any malicious gossip about me, I am not afraid of exposing my conduct to the light of day, and I am ready to reply to anything that may have been said; he knows the mendacity of intriguers too well to condemn me without a hearing. There are cowards who do so too; but one must hope that the day will arrive when the truly devoted people are recognized. He told me that it would be useless for me to become involved in his affairs; I am sorry for it; since I like to think they would have been arranged as he desires. I suspect I probably know the person who has influenced him in the matter; if I had been less discreet at the time, it would not have done me any harm with your excellent patron. Well, I am no less devoted to him, and you may tell him so in presenting my respectful homage. I dare to hope that the day will come when he will know and understand me.*

*Accept, I beg you, Sir, etc.’*

Hyacinthe wrote this reply which I dictated to him:

*‘My patron has nothing at all against the person who has written; but he wishes to live in private, and does not wish to accept any assistance.’*

Soon after this, trouble occurred.

Do you know the Rue des Prouvaires, a narrow, dirty and busy street near Saint-Eustache and Les Halles? It was there that a famous supper was held during the third Restoration. The guests were armed with pistols, daggers, and iron bars; after the drinks, they were going to enter the Louvre Gallery, and passing between two rows of masterpieces at midnight, strike the usurping monster in the midst of a reception. The conception was romantic; the sixteenth century had returned, and one might have believed it was the age among men of the Borgias, the Medicis of Florence, and the Medicis of Paris.

On the 1st of February, at nine in the evening, I was going to bed, when an extremist, and the individual with the bills of exchange, knocked on my door, in the Rue d’Enfer, to tell me all was ready, that in two hours Louis-Philippe would be no more; they came to discover whether they could declare me leader of the provisional government, and whether I would consent to take the reins, in a Regency Council, of that provisional government, in the name of Henri V. They confessed that the matter was dangerous, but that I could not win more glory, and that, as I suited all parties, I was the only man in France in a position to play the role. I was close pressed: two hours were allowed for me to decide on my coronation! Two hours to sharpen the mighty Mameluke sabre I had bought in Cairo in 1806! Yet I found no difficulty in saying to them: *‘Gentlemen, you know I have never approved of this enterprise, which seems foolish to me. If I had chosen to be involved, I would have shared the risk, not waited for your victory in order to accept the reward for the danger you run. You know I love liberty deeply, and it is obvious to me, from the leadership of this whole affair, that they do not want liberty, that they will begin, as masters of the field of battle, to impose arbitrary rule. They would find no one, I especially, to support them in that project; their success would lead to total anarchy, and foreign powers, profiting from our discord, would dismember France. I cannot therefore be involved in all that. I admire your devotion, but mine is not of a*

*like nature. I am going to bed; I advise you to do the same, and I have great fears of learning of your friends' misfortunes tomorrow.'*

The supper took place; the host, who had prepared it with official consent, knew what was going on. Informers at the table clinked their glasses loudest, in drinking Henri V's health; the police sergeants arrived, seized the guests and yet again overthrew the royalist legitimacy's coup. The Rinaldo of the royalist adventurers was a cobbler from the Rue de Seine, decorated in July, who had fought valiantly during the Three Days, and who grievously wounded one of Louis-Philippe's police agents, on behalf of Henri V, as he had killed guardsmen to oust that same Henri V and the two elder kings.

During this affair I received a note from Madame la Duchesse de Berry nominating me as a member of a secret government she had established in her name, as Regent of France. I took the opportunity to write the Princess the following letter:

*'Madame,*

*It is with the deepest gratitude that I received the witness of your confidence and esteem with which you have been so kind as to honor me; it imposes on my loyalty the duty of redoubling my zeal, in laying before your Royal Highness' eyes the truth as it appears to me.*

*I will speak first of the so called conspiracy, rumors of which will perhaps have reached Your Royal Highness. It is claimed that it was fabricated or provoked by the police. Leaving that to one side and without insisting on whether the conspiracy (real or imagined) had anything reprehensible about it, I will content myself with remarking that our national character is at the same time too superficial and too open for such things to succeed. For forty years these kinds of criminal enterprise have continually failed. There is nothing extraordinary in hearing a French person boasting publicly that they are part of a plot; they will tell all the details, without forgetting the date, place and hour, to any spy they take for a colleague; they say aloud, or rather shout to the passers-by: "We have forty thousand men all told, we have sixty million cartridges, such and such a street, at this number, in the house at the corner." And then this Catiline will dance around smiling.*

*Secret societies alone have wide scope, because they proceed by revolution and not by conspiracy; they aim to change doctrines, ideas and morals before changing men and things; their progress is slow, but the results assured. The publicity given to their thought destroys the influence of secret societies; public opinion now achieves in France what hidden gatherings accomplish among nations that are not yet emancipated.*

*The regions of the West and South, which they seem to want to push to the limits of endurance, by arbitrary violence, retain that spirit of loyalty which distinguishes past morality; but that section of France will not conspire in the strict sense of the word: it is a kind of armed camp in waiting. Admirable as a reserve for the Legitimacy, it would be insufficient as a vanguard and could never be successful in taking the offensive. Civilization has made too much progress for civil war to break out with any great result, a recourse and scourge of centuries which is at the same time most Christian and least enlightened.*



*What exists in France is not a monarchy, it is a republic; in truth, of the worst kind. This republic is protected by royalty, like a breastplate which receives the blows and prevents them striking the government itself.*

*Moreover, if the Legitimacy is a considerable force, election is also a dominating power, even when it is only a fiction, especially in this country where we see only vanity: the French passion for equality prides itself on elections.*

*Louis-Philippe's government indulges in excesses of both arbitrary power and obsequiousness of which Charles X's government never dreamed. Why is such excess tolerated? Because the people more easily support the tyranny of a government they have created than the legal rigor of institutions which are not their work.*

*Forty years of trial have broken the firmest hearts; apathy is prevalent, egotism is rife; people shrink inwards to escape danger, to keep what they have, to struggle along in peace. After a revolution there are gangrened casualties who communicate their sickness to all, as after a battle corpses are left to pollute the air. If Henri V could be transported to the Tuileries without trouble, without a tremor, without compromising the least interest, we would be in sight of a Restoration; but if only one sleepless night is needed to achieve it, the chances diminish.*

*The result of those days of July has produced no benefit to the people, no honor for the army, no advantage to literature, the arts, commerce or industry. The State has become the prey of professional politicians and of that class which sees the country as its cooking pot and public affairs as its kitchen: it is difficult, Madame, for you to understand from afar what is now called the happy-medium; that His Royal Highness presents a figure completely devoid of elevation of soul, nobility of feeling, dignity of character; that he represents people inflated with their own importance, enchanted with their jobs, panicky about money, ready to die for their pensions: nothing will pry them free; it is a matter of life or death to them; they are wedded to it all, as the Gauls were to their weapons, knights to the Oriflamme, Huguenots to Henri IV's white banner, and Napoleon's soldiers to the tricolor flag; they will die only of exhaustion from swearing oaths to every regime, after spilling the last drop of their blood in a last battle. These eunuchs of the quasi-legitimacy dogmatize about freedom while assaulting citizens in the streets and throwing writers in gaol; they intone songs of victory while evacuating Belgium on the orders of an English Minister, and soon Ancona on the orders of an Austrian corporal. They slope between the gates of Saint-Pélagie prison and the doors of the Cabinets of Europe, stiff with liberty and encrusted with glory.*

*What I say regarding the state of France should not discourage Your Royal Highness; but I wish you to gain a better understanding of the path that leads to Henri V's throne.*

*You know my thoughts concerning the education of my young king: my sentiments are expressed at the end of the pamphlet which I set at Your Royal Highness' feet: I can only repeat it. Let Henri V be raised for his century, with and for men of his century; those two phrases sum up my whole policy. Above all, let him not be raised to be king. He may reign tomorrow, he may reign in ten years' time, or he may never reign: for though the Legitimacy may have several opportunities to return which I will soon develop further, nevertheless the edifice may actually fall without the Legitimacy emerging from its ruins. You have a strong enough spirit, Madame, to imagine, without allowing yourself to be overcome, a*

*judgement from God which would plunge your illustrious race back into the common stock; just as you have a heart great enough to nourish real hopes without allowing yourself to become intoxicated with them. I should now present you with the other side of the picture.*

*Your Royal Highness can defy everything, and brave everything at your age; you have as many years left to run as have passed since the start of the Revolution. Now, what can one not see happening in those years? When the Republic, the Empire, and the Legitimacy have passed, shall the amphibious happy-medium not pass away also! What! Was it to arrive at the present wretchedness of men and things that we traversed and expended so much criminality, so much evil, talent, liberty and glory! What! Europe overthrown, thrones crumbling, generations hurled into the ditch with daggers in their chests, the world in travail for half a century, all that to give birth to a quasi-legitimacy! One could conceive of a great republic emerging from that social cataclysm; that at least would be skillful in utilizing the inheritance won by the Revolution, namely, political freedom, the freedom of the Press and of thought, the levelling of social class, admission to all posts, equality of all before the law, and the election of a popular monarchy. But how could one imagine that a gang of sordid mediocrities rescued from shipwreck could employ such principles? To what proportions have they already reduced them! They detest them and only sigh after the laws of 'exception'; they would lock away all freedoms behind the crown they have forged, as if behind a trap-door; then they talk rapturous nonsense about canals, railroads, fiddling with the arts, sorting out literature; a world of machines, chatter and self-importance called a model society. Bad luck on all superiority, on any man of genius ambitious for advancement, for glory and pleasure, sacrifice and fame, aspiring to triumph at the rostrum, with the lyre or with arms, who might raise himself one day above that universal ennui!*

*There is only one reason, Madame, why the quasi-legitimacy might continue to stagnate: that is if the present state of society were the natural state of that society in the era in which we now live. If an aged nation found itself in accord with its decrepit government; if between governors and governed there was a harmony of infirmity and weakness, then, Madame, all would be over for Your Royal Highness, as for the rest of us French. But if we have not yet arrived at our national dotage, if a Republic is immediately possible, then it is the Legitimacy which seems called upon to revive it. Live your youth, Madame, and you will inherit the royal tatters of that poor thing called the July Monarchy. Say to your enemies what your ancestress, Queen Blanche, said to hers during the minority of Saint-Louis: "Waiting does not bother me." The best years of life have been granted you in compensation for your misfortunes, and the future will bring you as many joys as the present has robbed you of years.*

*The first reason which militates in your favor, Madame, is the justice of your cause and your son's innocence. Events are not all against true right.'*

After detailing the reasons for hope which I scarcely nourished myself but which I sought to magnify in order to console the Princess, I continued:

*'Behold, Madame, the precarious state of the quasi-legitimacy at home; abroad its position is no more assured.*

*If Louis-Philippe's government had felt that the July Revolution had erased all previous transactions, and that a different national constitution could lead to different political rights and could alter social interests; if it had shown judgement and courage at the outset of its career, it could have re-*

*established for France, without firing a shot, the frontiers which have been taken from her, so ready would have been the consent of the nations, and so great the stupefaction of their kings. The quasi-legitimacy could have paid for its silver crown by an accession of territory, and could have been secure in that farce. Instead of profiting from the republican element to make swift progress, it has shown fear of principle; it dragged itself along on its belly; it has abandoned nations roused by it and for it; it has made them opposed to being the client states which they were; it has extinguished enthusiasm for war, it has changed into a pusillanimous wish for peace the clear desire to re-establish the balance of power between ourselves and neighboring states, and to at least reclaim from those immoderately swollen states the detached portions of our former country. Through a failure of courage and lack of genius, Louis-Philippe has recognized treaties which are not in character with revolution, treaties which it cannot tolerate, and which the foreign powers themselves have violated.*

*The happy-medium has left foreign governments the time to take stock and deploy their armies. And as the existence of a democratic monarchy is incompatible with the existence of the continental monarchies, hostilities, despite the protocols, the financial embarrassments, mutual fears, prolonged armistices, graciously-worded dispatches, and demonstrations of friendship, hostilities, I say, may be fueled by that incompatibility. Though our bourgeois royalty is resigned to being insulted, though men dream of peace, events may dictate war.*

*But whether war breaks out under the quasi-legitimacy or not, I know, Madame, that you will not put your trust in foreign powers; you would prefer Henri V not to reign than to see him do so under the patronage of a European coalition: it is in yourself, it is in your son that hopes lie. In whatever way one considers the decrees they could never affect Henri V; innocent of everything, he has the centuries on his side, and his natal misfortunes. If evil touches us in the solitude of a tomb, it moves us even more when it watches over a cradle; for then it is no longer remembrance of something past, of a wretched creature and one that has ceased to suffer; it is a painful reality; it saddens days which should only see joy; it threatens a life which has done nothing to it, and has not merited its severity.*

*On your side, Madame, you have a powerful authority derived from your adversities. You, bathed in your husband's blood, bore in your womb the son that political minds called the child of Europe and religious ones the child of miracle. What influence do you not exercise over public opinion, when you alone are seen to guard, for the exiled orphan, the potent crown that Charles X shook from his whitened head, and of whose weight two other brows were relieved, so charged with sorrow that he permitted them to reject that new burden! Your image presents itself to our minds with those feminine graces that seem to occupy their natural place in occupying a throne. The people nourish no prejudices against you; they grieve for your pain, they admire your courage; they keep the memory of your days of mourning; they are grateful for your having joined in their pleasures later, for having shared their enjoyments and festivals; they find a charm in the vivacity of this foreign Frenchwoman, from a country dear to our glory because of Fornovo, Marignan, Arcola and Marengo. The Muses miss their benefactress born under the lovely skies of Italy, which inspired the love of art in her, which made a descendant of Francis I of a descendant of Henri IV.*

*France has often changed leaders since the Revolution, and has not yet seen a woman at the tiller of the State. Perhaps God wishes that the reins of this indomitable nation, reins loosed from the greedy hands of the Convention, broken in Bonaparte's victorious hands, grasped in vain by Louis XVIII and*

*Charles X, should be gathered by a young Princess; she will know how to make them less fragile and at the same time lighter.'*

Finally, reminding Madame that she had chosen to think of my forming part of the secret government, I ended my letter thus:

*'You know, Madame, the range of ideas among which I see the possibility of a Restoration; other permutations would be outside the gates of my spirit; I would confess my inadequacy. It is ostensibly, and by proclaiming myself a man of your party, and in your confidence, that I would gain strength; but, a plenipotentiary Minister of the Night, a Chargé d'Affaires accredited to the Shades, that is something I feel no aptitude for. If Your Royal Highness named me publicly as your Ambassador to the people of the new France, I would inscribe in large letters over my door; The Legation of the Former France. There would be something in that which would please God; but I will hear nothing of secret loyalties; I only know how to be guilty of fidelity, by committing a flagrant offence.*

*Madame, without refusing Your Royal Highness the services which you have the right to command of me, I beg you to accept the plans I have made to finish my days in retirement. My ideas will not suit those who are in the confidence of the noble exiles of Holyrood; the evil being past, their natural antipathy to my principles and my person would be rekindled with prosperity. I have seen the rejection of plans I have presented for the grandeur of my country, to give France frontiers within which she could exist protected from invasion, to release her from the shameful treaties of Vienna and Paris. I found myself treated as a renegade when I defended religion, a revolutionary when I tried to found the throne on the basis of public freedoms. I would find the same obstacles enhanced by the hatred that the Court faithful, of the city and the provinces, will have conceived from the lesson my conduct on the day of trial inflicted on them. I have too little ambition, too much need for repose to make my attachment to the Crown a burden, and impose upon it my untimely presence. I have fulfilled my duty without for a single moment considering that it might give me some right to the favor of an august family: happy only that it has permitted me to embrace its adversities! I look for nothing beyond that honor; it will be found among the youngest and cleverest. I do not think I am essential, and I think essential men are no longer needed these days: useless at present, I will enter solitude to occupy myself with the past. I hope, Madame, to live long enough to add a glorious chapter to the history of the Restoration, promised to France by your future fate.*

*I am with the most profound respect, Madame, your Most Royal Highness's very humble and obedient servant.*

CHATEAUBRIAND

*Paris, this 25th of March 1832.'*

The letter was obliged to wait for a reliable courier; time marched on and I added this postscript to my dispatch:

*'Paris, the 12th of April 1832.*

*Madame,*

*Everything dates rapidly in France; every day new political opportunities arise and begin another series of events. We are now involved with Monsieur Périer's illness and God's epidemic. I have sent Monsieur le Préfet de la Seine the sum of 12000 francs which the exiled daughter of Saint Louis and Henri IV destined for the relief of unfortunates; what a worthy use for her noble poverty! I will try to be the faithful interpreter of your wishes, Madame. I have never in my life received a mission with which I felt more honored.*

*I am with the profoundest respect, etc.'*

*Before speaking of this matter of 12000 francs for the cholera victims, mentioned in the postscript, I must speak about the cholera itself. During my voyage in the Orient I had not encountered plague, it came to meet me at home; the 'fortune' I had run to find was sitting waiting for me at my door; in Lisbon there is a magnificent monument on which this epitaph can be read: Ci git Basco Fuguera contre sa volonté: here Lies Basco Fuguera, against his will. My mausoleum will be modest, and I will not rest there despite myself.*

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 14

#### Incidents of Plague

At the time of the plague in Athens, in the year 431BC, twenty-two great plagues had already swept the world. The Athenians thought their wells had been poisoned; a common idea resurrected during all epidemics. Thucydides has left us a description of the Attic scourge, re-worked among ancient writers by Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid, and Lucan, and among the moderns by Boccaccio and Manzoni. It is remarkable that regarding the plague at Athens, Thucydides says nothing of Hippocrates, just as he fails to name Socrates when talking about Alcibiades. His plague first attacked the head then descended into the stomach, from there it passed into the gut, and finally into the legs; if it emerged in the feet having traversed the whole body like a long serpent, the victim recovered. Hippocrates called it the divine sickness, and Thucydides the *sacred fire*; they regarded both as the flame of celestial wrath.

One of the most dreadful plagues was that which struck Constantinople in the sixth century, in Justinian's reign: Christianity had already modified people's imaginations and given a new character to disaster, just as it altered poetry; the victims thought they saw ghosts wandering round them and heard threatening voices.

The Black Death, of the fourteenth century, commonly known by that name, originated in China: it was thought to travel in the form of a fiery vapor while spreading an odor of infection. It carried off four fifths of the inhabitants of Europe.

In 1575 that contagion descended on Milan which rendered immortal Carlo Borromeo's charity. Fifty-four years later, in 1629, that unhappy city was again exposed to the miseries of which Manzoni paints a picture superior to that celebrated description of Boccaccio's.

In 1660 the scourge appeared again in Europe, and in those two plague years of 1629 and 1660 produced the same symptoms of delirium as the plague in Constantinople.

*'Marseilles', says Monsieur Lemontey, 'was emerging in 1720 from festivities to mark the visit of Mademoiselle de Valois, married to the Duke of Modena. Beside the galleys still decorated with garlands and filled with musicians floated various vessels carrying the most dreadful of diseases from the harbors of Syria.'*

The fatal ship of which Monsieur Lemontey speaks, having shown a clean bill of health, was allowed communication with the shore for a while, long enough to contaminate the air; a storm compounded the problem and the plague spread to the sound of thunder.

The gates of the city and the windows of the houses were closed. Amidst a universal silence a window was heard to open, now and then, and a corpse was thrown out; the walls would be streaked with its gangrenous blood, and master-less dogs waited beneath to devour it. In one quarter where all the inhabitants perished, they were walled up in their houses, as if to prevent death from emerging. From these great avenues of family tombs, the crossroads were reached whose paving stones were covered with the sick and dying, lying on pallets and abandoned without aid. Half-rotted cadavers lay in the mud,

wound in old rags; other bodies were left leaning upright against the walls, in the attitude in which they had died.

All fled, except the doctors; the Bishop, Monsieur de Belzunce, wrote: '*Doctors should be abolished, or at least those they provide should be more skillful or less fearful. I have had a great deal of trouble persuading them to remove around a hundred and fifty half-rotting corpses from the neighborhood of my house.*'

On one occasion, the galley-slaves refused to carry out their undertaking functions: the apostle climbed onto one of the carts, seated himself on a pile of corpses, and ordered the convicts to proceed: death and virtue travelled towards the cemetery together drawn by crime and vice, terrified but admiring.

For three weeks corpses had been carried to the esplanade of La Tourette, neighboring the sea. Exposed there to the sun and swollen by its rays, they made a stinking lake. On the surface of that liquefied flesh, only the maggots moved on those crushed and shapeless forms, which might once have been human beings.

When the contagion began to relent, Monsieur de Belzunce, at the head of his clergy, took himself to the Église des Accoules: mounting a platform from which could be seen Marseille, the countryside, harbors and the sea, he gave the benediction, like the Pope, at Rome, blessing the city and the world; what more courageous or purer hand could have brought down the blessings of Heaven on so much misery?

Thus it was that the plague devastated Marseilles, and five years after these calamities, the following inscription was placed on the façade of the city-hall, like those funeral epitaphs one sees on tombs:

*Massilia Phocensium filia, Romae soror, Carthaginis terror, Athenarum aemula: Marseilles, daughter of Phoece, sister of Rome, terror of Carthage, emulator of Athens.*

## BOOK XXXIV

### CHAPTER 15

#### Cholera

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, May 1832*

Starting from the Ganges in 1817, Cholera has spread over an area measuring five and a half thousand miles north to south, and eight thousand seven hundred and fifty miles east to west; it has devastated fourteen hundred towns and reaped a harvest of forty million people. There is a map that plots the conqueror's march. It has taken fifteen years to travel from India to Paris: that is as swift as Bonaparte: the latter took almost the same number of years to go from Cadiz to Moscow, and he caused the death of only two or three million men.

What is cholera? Is it a deadly wind? Is it tiny insects which we swallow and which devour us? What is this mighty Black Death, armed with a scythe, which, crossing mountains and seas, comes like one of those awe-inspiring juggernauts worshipped on the shores of the Ganges to crush us under its chariot wheels on the banks of the Seine? This scourge if it had fallen on us in a religious age, if it had spread in an era accustomed to the poetry of morality and popular belief, would have left behind a striking picture. Imagine a pall by way of a flag flying from the height of Notre Dame's towers, the cannon firing single shots at intervals, to warn the imprudent traveller to turn back; a cordon of troops surrounding the city allowing no one to enter or leave; the churches filled with groaning crowds; priests chanting day and night their prayers of perpetual agony; the *Viaticum* carried from house to house with bell and candle; the bells constantly tolling the funeral knell; monks, crucifix in hand, at the crossroads summoning the people to repentance, preaching the wrath and judgement of God, manifested by the corpses already blackened by hellfire.

Then the shuttered shops, the Pontiff surrounded by his clergy, marching, with every priest at the head of his own parishioners, to fetch the reliquary of St. Geneviève; the holy relics carried round the city, preceded by a long procession of diverse religious orders, guilds, corporations, congregations of penitents, groups of veiled women, university scholars, alms-house ministers, and soldiers weapon-less or with their weapons reversed; the *Miserere* sung by priests, mingling with the hymns of girls and young children; all, at given signals, prostrating themselves silently and rising again to utter new plaints.

There is nothing of that today; cholera comes to us in an age of philanthropy, unbelief, the Press, and practical administration. This unimaginative scourge found no old cloisters, no monks, no vaults, no Gothic tombs; like the Terror of 1793, it strayed in broad daylight with a mocking air, through a new and unfamiliar world, accompanied by bulletins reciting the remedies used against it, the number of victims it had claimed, its progress, the hopes of seeing an end to it, the precautions to be taken to guard against it, what to eat, and how best to dress. Yet everyone continued to go about their business, and the theatres were full. I have seen drunkards sitting at a little wooden table by an inn-door, drinking a toast while raising their glasses: 'A health to you, *Morbus*!' *Morbus* (Pestilence) came running, in gratitude, and they fell dead beneath the table. The children played at *cholera*, calling it Nicholas Morbus and *Morbus the Villain*. Yet the cholera brought terror: bright sunshine, the crowd's indifference, the course of everyday life, continuing everywhere, gave these days of plague a strange character and a new kind of horror. Aches and pains were felt in every limb; a dry, cold northern wind parched the mouth; the air had a



certain metallic quality that gripped the throat. In the Rue du Cherche-Midi, wagons from the artillery depot carted the dead away. In the Rue de Sèvres, which was extensively affected, especially along the one side, the hearses came and went from door to door; they were inadequate to the demand; people called from the windows: '*The hearse, over here!*' The driver would answer that he was full and could not serve everyone. One of my friends, Monsieur Pouqueville, on his way to dine at my house on Easter Sunday, arriving at the Boulevard du Montparnasse, was stopped by a succession of biers almost all of them carried on men's shoulders. In this procession, he noticed the coffin of a young girl on which a wreath of white roses had been laid. The smell of chlorine left a sickly atmosphere in the wake of this floral cortege.

In the Place de la Bourse, where processions of workmen, singing *La Parisienne* would meet, funerals were often seen making their way towards the Montmartre cemetery as late as eleven at night, by the light of torches dipped in pitch. The Pont-Neuf was crowded with litters laden with patients for the hospitals, or the dead, who had expired during the journey. The toll at the Pont des Arts was suspended for several days. The booths vanished, and while the north-east wind blew, all the stallholders and shopkeepers on the embankments closed for business. One met carts covered with tarpaulins, preceded by the undertaker, with a registrar dressed in mourning clothes at the head, holding a list in his hand. There was a lack of these officials; they were obliged to send for more to Saint-Germain, La Villette, and Saint-Cloud. Other hearses would be laden with five or six coffins all roped together. Omnibuses and hackney-carriages served the same purpose; it was not unusual to see a cabriolet adorned with a corpse laid across the apron. A few of the dead were carried to the churches; a priest sprinkled holy water over these faithful ones gathered together for the passage to eternity.

In Athens, the people once believed the wells near the Piraeus had been poisoned; in Paris, tradesmen were accused of poisoning wine, spirits, sweets and other foodstuffs. Several individuals were attacked, dragged through the gutters, and hurled into the Seine. The authorities were themselves to blame for issuing faulty or criminal advice.

How did the scourge pass from London to Paris, like a spark of electricity? No one knows. This capricious form of death would settle on some piece of ground, or a house, and leave everything in the neighborhood of the infested spot untouched; then it would retrace its steps and seize on what it had forgotten. One night I felt an attack; I was seized with shivering and cramp in my legs; I did not wish to ring the bell, for fear of alarming Madame de Chateaubriand. I rose; I piled everything I could find in my room onto the bed, and crawling under the blankets again, by sweating copiously, pulled through. But I was left aching all over, and it was in this wretched state that I was forced to write my pamphlet on Madame la Duchesse de Berry's 12000 francs.

I should not have been too sorry to go, carried off under the arm of Vishnu's eldest son, whose distant glance killed Bonaparte on his rocky isle at the gateway to the Southern Seas. If all mankind, stricken with a common contagion, were to die, what would happen? Nothing: the Earth, depopulated, would continue on its solitary way, needing no other astronomer to plot its course than He who measures it out through all eternity; it would present no difference to the inhabitants of other planets; they would see it accomplishing its usual functions; on its surface, our petty works, our cities, and our monuments would be replaced by wilderness, restored to the sovereignty of lions; no gap would be apparent in the universe. And yet that human intelligence would be lacking which scans the stars, and even rises to the knowledge

of their Creator. How great you are, O immensity of the works of God, in which the genius of man, which is equal to the whole of Nature, would no more be missed, if it vanished, than the smallest atom removed from Creation!

**End of Book XXXIV**

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 1

Madame la Duchesse de Berry's 12000 francs

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, May 1832*

Madame de Berry had her little group of advisers in Paris, as Charles X had his: they received small sums of money in her name to assist poverty-stricken royalists. I proposed to distribute a sum of twelve thousand francs to the cholera victims on behalf of Henri V's mother. They wrote to Massa, and not only did the Princess approve the distribution of funds, but she wished it could be a more considerable amount: her letter agreeing to this arrived on the same day that I sent the money to the mayoralties. Thus, everything I said about the exile's gift is strictly correct. On the 14th of April I sent the Prefect of the Seine the full amount to be distributed to the poorest section of the population of Paris afflicted by contagion. Monsieur de Bondy was not at the Hotel de Ville when my letter was delivered to him. The Secretary General opened my missive, but did not consider himself authorized to accept the money. Three days passed. Monsieur de Bondy at last replied to me saying that he could not accept the twelve thousand francs because in the guise of charity it was evidently *a political device, which the whole population of Paris would protest against, by its refusal*. My secretary then approached the twelve district mayors. Of the five mayors present, four accepted the gift of a thousand francs; one refused. Of the seven mayors not present, five maintained their silence: two refused.

I was immediately besieged by an army of indigents: charitable foundations, workers of all kinds, women and children. Italian and Polish exiles, writers, artists, soldiers, all wrote, and all claimed a part of the donation. If I had possessed a million, it would have gone in a few hours. Monsieur de Bondy was wrong in saying *that the whole population of Paris would protest by its refusal*: the population of Paris will accept money from anyone. The government's agitation was laughable; one would have thought this treacherous legitimist cash would cause an uprising among the cholera victims, and excite an insurrection of the dying in the hospitals, who would march to assault the Tuileries, beating their coffins, tolling the death-knell, deployed in their shrouds under the command of Death. My correspondence with the mayors was lengthened by the complication caused by the Prefect of Paris' refusal. Some of them wrote to me to return my money or to ask me for a receipt regarding the return of Madame la Duchess de Berry's gift. I duly sent them and delivered this acknowledgement to the Mayor of the twelfth district: *'I have received from the Mayor of the twelfth arrondissement the sum of one thousand francs which he had previously accepted and which he has returned to me by order of the Prefect of the Seine.*

*Paris, this 22nd of April 1832.'*

The Mayor of the ninth district, Monsieur Cronier, was more courageous: he kept the thousand francs and was relieved of his duties. I wrote him this note:

*'29th of April 1832.*

*Sir,*

*I learn with distress of your dismissal, of which Madame la Duchesse de Berry's gift was the cause, or for which it was the pretext. You have for consolation the public's esteem, your feelings of independence and the knowledge of your self-sacrifice in the victims' cause.*

*I have the honor, etc., etc.'*

The Mayor of the fourth district was quite another sort: Monsieur Cadet de Gassicourt, the poet-pharmacist, maker of little verses, creating in his age, the age of liberty and Empire, a pleasantly classical statement opposing my romantic prose and that of Madame de Staël, was the hero who took by assault the cross from above the porch of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, and who, in a proclamation regarding the cholera, stated that the wicked Carlists may well have been those who poisoned the wine, to whom the people had already meted out justice. The illustrious champion then wrote me the following letter:

*'Paris, the 18th of March 1832.*

*Sir,*

*I was absent from the city hall when the person you sent presented himself: that will explain my delay in replying.*

*Monsieur le Préfet de la Seine, having refused to accept the money which you were charged with offering him, seems to me to have laid down the mode of conduct which the Members of the Municipal Council should adopt. I follow Monsieur le Préfet's example even more strongly in that I believe in and share entirely the sentiments which led him to refuse.*

*I will merely mention in passing the title Royal Highness bestowed with affection on the person of whom you are appointed agent: the daughter-in-law of Charles X is no more a Royal Highness in France, than her father-in-law is king! Yet, Sir, there is no one who is not morally convinced that this lady is an active agitator, and expends sums much more considerable than those she has trusted you to employ, in stirring up trouble in our country and instigating civil war. The alms which she has the pretension to bestow are merely a means of attracting attention to herself and her party and are a kindness which her intentions are far from justifying. You will not find it strange then that a magistrate firmly attached to the constitutional monarchy of Louis-Philippe should refuse help which comes from such a source, and will find, among true citizens, purer acts of generosity addressed with sincerity to humanity and our country.*

*I am, with the greatest respect, Sir, etc.*

*F. CADET DE GASSICOURT'*

This attack of Monsieur Cadet de Gassicourt's on the *lady* and her *father-in-law* displays great pride: what progress enlightenment and philosophy have made! What an invincible show of independence! Messieurs Fleurant and Purgon would only have dared gaze at people on their knees; to them, Monsieur Cadet says like *the Cid*: ...*Let us rise then!* His liberty is all the more courageous in that this *father-in-law* (otherwise a descendant of Saint Louis) is proscribed. Monsieur de Gassicourt is above all that; he scorns the nobility and the misfortunes of the age equally. It is with the same disdain for aristocratic prejudices that he misses out my *de* in addressing me, and takes it as a victory over the gentry. Yet, was there not some ancient rivalry, some ancient historic dispute between the House of Cadet and the House of Capet?

Henri IV, ancestor of this *father-in-law* who is no more king than the *lady* is a Royal Highness, was traversing the forest of Saint-Germain one day; eight Leaguers lay in ambush to murder the Béarnais;

they were seized. ‘*One of these gallants,*’ says L’Estoile, ‘*was an apothecary who demanded to speak to the King, and on His Majesty enquiring of what rank he was, he replied that he was an apothecary. “What!” said the King, “is there a rank of apothecary round here? Do you lie in wait for passers-by to give them enemas?”*’ Henri IV was a soldier, immodest speech scarcely bothered him, and he no more retreated from a word than from an enemy.

I suspect Monsieur de Gassicourt, given his ill-humor towards Henri IV’s descendant, of being a descendant of that pharmacist Leaquer. The Mayor of the fourth district no doubt wrote to me in the hope that I would cross swords with him; but I do not wish to do battle with Monsieur Cadet: may he forgive me for leaving him a little mark of my remembrance here.

Since those days when I witnessed great revolutions and great revolutionaries, everything has shriveled. Men who toppled an oak tree, too old to take root if replanted, addressed themselves to me; they demanded a few pounds from the widow in order to buy bread; this letter from the *Committee for the July Medal-Winners* is a useful document to note for future reference.

*‘Paris, the 20th of April 1832.*

*RSVP, to Monsieur Gibert-Arnaud, Managing-Secretary of the Committee, 3 Rue Saint-Nicaise.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*The Members of our Committee write in confidence to ask you if you would honor them with a gift for the July medal-winners, unfortunate family men; in this time of plague and misery, your kindness would inspire the most sincere gratitude. We dare to hope that you will consent to set your illustrious name beside those of Messieurs le General Bertrand, General Exelmans, General Lamarque, General Lafayette, various Ambassadors, Peers of France, and Deputies.*

*We beg you to honor us with a word in reply, and if, contrary to our hopes, a refusal follows our request, be good enough to return this note to us.*

*With the purest of sentiments we beg you, Monsieur le Vicomte, to accept the homage of our respective greetings.*

*The active Members of the Committee for the July Medal-Winners:*

*Visiting Member: Faure.*

*Special Commissioner: Cyprien-Desmaret.*

*Managing-Secretary: Gibert-Arnaud.*

*Assistant Member: Tourel.’*

I took care not to relinquish the advantage that the July Revolution here granted me over itself. In distinguishing between people, it had created islands of unfortunates, who, because of certain political opinions, were not to be helped. I quickly sent the gentlemen a hundred francs, with this note:

*‘Paris, this 22nd of April 1832.*

*Gentlemen,*

*I thank you deeply for contacting me with regard to my coming to the aid of various unfortunate family men. I hasten to send you the sum of one hundred francs; I regret not having a more substantial gift to offer.*

*I have the honor, etc.*

CHATEAUBRIAND.’

The following receipt was sent to me immediately:

*‘Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I have the honor to thank you and to acknowledge receipt of one hundred francs which you kindly destine for relief of the July unfortunates.*

*Salutations and respect.*

*The Managing-Secretary of the Committee:*

GIBERT-ARNAUD.

*23rd of April.’*

Thus, Madame la Duchesse de Berry gave alms to those who had pursued her. These transactions lay bare the heart of things. Consider the reality of a country where no one cares for their party’s casualties, where the heroes of yesterday are cast adrift tomorrow, where a little gold attracts a crowd, as farmyard pigeons flock to the hand that throws them grain.

Four thousand francs of the twelve thousand remained. I addressed myself to religion; Monsignor the Archbishop of Paris wrote me this noble letter:

*‘Paris, the 26th of April 1832.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*Charity like faith is catholic, a stranger to human passions, independent of their politics: one of the primary characteristics which distinguish it, according to St. Paul, is to think no evil: non cogitate malum. She blesses the hand that gives and the hand that receives, without attributing to the generous benefactor any motive other than that of doing a good deed, and without asking from the poor sufferer any condition other than need. She accepts with profound and heart-felt thanks the gift that the august widow has charged you with conferring on her, for the relief of our unfortunate brothers who are victims of the scourge which has afflicted the capital.*

*She will distribute the four thousand francs you have given me for her with faithful care, and this letter is a fresh receipt, but I will have the honor to inform you of the details of the distribution when the benefactress’ intentions have been fulfilled.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte, please convey to the Duchesse de Berry the gratitude of a shepherd and father who offers his life to God, every day, on behalf of his lambs and his children, and who calls to*

*everyone for aid sufficient to meet their needs, Her royal heart has doubtless already found within herself recompense for the sacrifice she has made for our unfortunates; religion assures her moreover of the efficacy of the divine promise committed to delivering blessings upon those who show mercy.*

*A distribution has been carried out immediately among the priests of the twelve main parishes of Paris, to whom I am addressing the letter of which I here enclose a copy.*

*Accept, Monsieur le Vicomte, the assurance, etc.*

*Hyacinthe, Archbishop of Paris.*

It is always wonderful to see how religion creates its own style, and gives even to commonplaces a gravity and propriety which one feels at once. It contrasts with the tone of those anonymous letters which were mingled with the letters I have just cited. The orthography of these anonymous letters is correct enough, the writing fine; they are, properly speaking, *literary*, like the July Revolution. They show the jealousies, hatreds and vanities of hacks protected by the inviolability of a cowardliness which never showing its face cannot be revealed by a slap.

#### SAMPLES.

*'Tell us when you grease your moccasins, you old Republican! We can easily find you some Chouan grease, and some of your friends' blood to write their history with if you like, there's plenty in the Paris mud, it's their element.*

*Ask your rascally and worthy friend Fitz-James, Old Brigand, if the stone he received in the feudal cause gave him pleasure. You pile of scoundrels, we'll rip your guts out, etc., etc.'*

In another missive, can be seen a neatly drawn gallows with these words:

*'Get on your knees to a priest, and make contrition, as we want your old head to end its treason.'*

Anyway, the cholera is still with us: the reply I might send a known, or unknown, adversary might perhaps arrive when he was dying at the threshold of his house. If on the other hand he was destined to live, where would his reply reach me? Perhaps in that place of rest which no one fears these days, above all we whose lives span the Terror, and the Plague, the first and last of our life's horizons. Enough: let the coffins go by.

BOOK XXXV  
CHAPTER 2  
General Lamarque's cortege

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, 10th of June 1832*

General Lamarque's cortege lead to two blood-stained days and the victory of the Quasi-Legitimacy over the Republican Party. The latter, fragmented and disunited, carried out a heroic resistance.

Paris was placed in a state of siege: it was censure on the largest possible scale, censure in the style of the Convention, with this difference: that a military commission replaced the revolutionary tribunal. In June 1832 they shot the men who brought them victory in July 1830; they sacrificed that same École Polytechnique, that same artillery of the National Guard, who had conquered the powers that be, on behalf of those who now struck at them, disavowed them and cast them off! The Republicans were certainly wrong to have espoused the methods of anarchy and disorder; but should we not rather have deployed such noble arms on our frontiers? They would have delivered us from the yoke of the stranger. Generous and exalted spirits would not thereby have remained in Paris fermenting trouble, inflamed by our shameful foreign policy and the disloyalty of our new monarchy. You have shown no mercy, you who, without sharing the dangers of the Three Days, reaped the rewards. Go, with their mothers, now, and seek the bodies of those medal-winners of July, whose positions, wealth and honors you have taken. You, our young men, have met differing fates on the same shore! You possess both tombs beneath the colonnade of the Louvre and places in the Morgue; some for having seized, others for having granted a crown. Who knows your names, you makers of sacrifice and you victims, forever unknown, of a memorable revolution? Who remembers those whose blood cements the monuments men admire? The workers who built the Great Pyramid, to hold the body of an inglorious pharaoh, sleep forgotten in the sand, among the sparse roots that nourished them during their labor.



## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 3

Madame la Duchesse de Berry goes to Provence and arrives in the Vendée

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, the end of July 1832.*

Madame la Duchesse de Berry had no sooner sanctioned the expenditure of her 12000 francs than she embarked on her notorious adventure. An attempt to rouse Marseilles failed; only the West remained open to an attempt: but the glory of the Vendée is another thing; it lives on in the splendor of our history, yet nine tenths of France chose a different glory, the object of jealousy and antipathy; the Vendée is an Oriflamme, venerated and admired, in the treasury of Saint-Denis, beneath which youth and the future no longer range themselves.

Madame, disembarking like Bonaparte, on the coast of Provence, saw no white banners flying from steeple to steeple: deceived in her expectations, she found herself almost alone with Monsieur de Bourmont in the field. The Marshal wanted her to cross the frontier again immediately; she asked for a night to consider; she slept well on the cliffs to the sound of the sea; on waking in the morning she pursued a noble dream with the thought: ‘*Since I am on French soil, I will not leave: let us go to the Vendée.*’ Monsieur de Villeneuve-Bargemont, warned by a loyal follower, took her in his carriage with his wife, crossed the whole of France, and deposited her at Montaigu, where she stayed for a while, in a château, without being recognized except by a priest of the place; Marshal Bourmont was to rejoin her in the Vendée, by another route.

Informed of all this in Paris, it was easy for us to foresee the result. The enterprise presented another problem for the royalists; it would reveal the weakness of their cause and dispel illusions. If Madame had not gone to the Vendée, France would have continued to think there was, in the West, a Royalist force-in-waiting, as I dubbed it.

But there was still, in the end, a means of rescuing Madame and casting a fresh veil over the reality: the Princess must leave immediately; meeting with danger and peril, like a brave general reviewing an army, tempering impatience and ardor, she could have declared that she had hastened there to tell the soldiers that the time for action was not yet favorable, and that she would return to place herself at their head when the occasion demanded. Madame would at least have shown the inhabitants of the Vendée a Bourbon for once; the shades of Cathelineau, d'Elbée, Bonchamp, La Rochejaquelein, and Charette would have rejoiced.

Our committee assembled; while we were in discussion, a captain arrived from Nantes who told us where our heroine was staying. The captain was a fine young man, tough as a sailor, a Breton original. He disapproved of the enterprise; he thought it was foolish; but he said: ‘If Madame does not leave, it will prove mortal and that’s that; then, gentlemen of the council, you may hang Walter Scott, it will be he who is the guilty party.’ I was advised to write and inform the Princess of this sentiment. Monsieur Berryer, who was arranging to go to Vannes to plead a case, generously proposed to carry the letter and see Madame if he could. When it became necessary to pen the note, no one cared to write it: I took on the task.

Our messenger left, and we waited on events. I soon received the following letter, by post, which had not been concealed and had doubtless passed beneath the eyes of the authorities:

*‘Angoulême, the 7th of June.’*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I had received and transmitted your letter of last Friday, when on Sunday the Prefect of the Lower Loire invited me to leave Nantes. I was en route and at the gates of Angoulême; I have just been brought before the Prefect who has informed me of an order of Monsieur de Montalivet’s which requires me to be taken back to Nantes under police escort. Since my departure from Nantes, the department of the Lower Loire is in a state of siege: by this illegal action they are subjecting me to the laws of ‘exception.’ I have written to the Minister asking him to have me summoned to Paris; he has my letter by this courier. The aim of my journey to Nantes seems to have been completely misinterpreted. Judge whether in your prudence it would be appropriate to speak to the Minister. I ask your pardon for making this request of you; since I can address no one but you.*

*Believe, Monsieur le Vicomte, in my sincere and lasting attachment, as in my profound respect.*

*Your devoted servant,*

**BERRYER THE YOUNGER**

*P.S. – There is no time to be lost if you wish to see the Minister. I am on my way to Tours, where his fresh orders would find me on Sunday; he could transmit them by telegraph or dispatch rider.’*

I informed Monsieur Berryer, in this reply, of the action I had taken:

*‘Paris, the 10th of June 1832.*

*Sir, I have received your letter dated from Angoulême on the 7th of this month. It was too late to see the Minister of the Interior, as you would have wished me to; but I wrote to him immediately and passed him your letter enclosed with mine. I hope that the mistake which has led to your arrest will soon be acknowledged, and that you will be returned to freedom and your friends, among whom I beg to be included. A thousand compliments to you, and a fresh assurance of my sincere and complete devotion.*

**CHATEAUBRIAND’**

This was my letter to the Minister of the Interior:

*‘I have just received the enclosed letter. As it is likely that I will be unable to see you as swiftly as Monsieur Berryer desires, I have adopted the course of sending you his letter. His summons seems right to me: he will be as innocent in Paris as at Nantes; the authorities will acknowledge this, and will, by allowing Monsieur de Berryer’s recall, avoid applying the law retrospectively. I dare to rely totally, Monsieur le Comte, on your impartiality.*

*I have the honor, etc., etc.*

**CHATEAUBRIAND’**

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 4

#### My arrest

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, the end of July 1832*

An old Scottish friend of mine, Mr. Frisell, had just lost his only daughter, of seventeen, at Passy. On the 15th of June I went to the funeral of poor Élisa, whose portrait pretty Madame Delessert was finishing when death set there the last mark of the brush. Returning to my solitude, in the Rue d'Enfer, I retired to bed full of melancholy thoughts arising from the conjunction of youth, beauty and the grave. On the 16th of June, at four in the morning, Baptiste, who had been many years in my service, approached my bed and said: 'Sir, the courtyard is full of men placed at all the doors who forced Desbrosses to open the wicket, and there are three gentlemen who wish to speak to you.' As he finished speaking, the gentlemen entered, and their leader, very politely approaching my bed told me he had orders to arrest me and take me to the Police Prefecture. I asked him if the sun had yet risen, as the law required, and if he carried a legal order: he did not reply in regard to the sun, but he showed me the following document:

*Copy:*

#### *'PREFECTURE OF POLICE*

*By command of the King;*

*We, a Councillor of State, and Prefect of Police,*

*Acting on information received;*

*In virtue of Article 10 of the Criminal Code;*

*Require the Superintendent, or another if he is unavailable, to go to Monsieur le Vicomte de Chateaubriand's, or anywhere else as needs be, to prevent a plot against the State, with the aim of making of a search there and seizing all papers, correspondence, and writings containing incitements to crime or offences against the public peace, where open to examination, as well as all seditious objects or weapons which he may possess.'*

While I was reading this declaration of a great plot against the security of the State, of which little I was accused, the police chief said to his subordinates: 'Gentlemen, do your duty!' These gentlemen's duty was to open all the cupboards, to rummage in all my pockets, to seize all my papers, letters and documents, to read them, if they could, and discover all weapons, as required by the terms of the aforesaid order.

After a reading of the document, I addressed myself to the respectable leader of these takers of men and freedom: 'You know, Sir, that I do not recognize your government, and that I protest against the violence done to me; but as I am not the stronger and have no desire to grapple with you, I will get up and follow you: have the goodness, I beg you, to take a seat.'

I dressed, and taking nothing with me, I said to the venerable Superintendent: 'Sir, I am at your disposal: are we going on foot? – No, Sir, I have taken the trouble to get you a cab. – That is very good of you: Sir, let us depart; but allow me to say goodbye to Madame de Chateaubriand. Will you allow me to go into my

wife's room alone? – Sir, I will accompany you to the door and wait for you there – Very well, Sir.’ And we descended.

In the street, there were sentries everywhere; they had even placed a cavalry picket on the boulevard, at a little door which opened onto the end of my garden. I said to their chief: *‘These precautions were quite useless; I have not the least intention of fleeing you and escaping.’* The gentlemen had jumbled my papers but not taken anything. My great Mameluke sabre caught their attention; they talked in low voices and ended by leaving the weapon under a heap of dusty folios, in the midst of which lay a crucifix of yellow wood which I had brought from the Holy Land.

This pantomime would have almost roused me to laughter, but I was cruelly tormented in regard of Madame de Chateaubriand. Whoever knows her, also knows the tenderness she shows towards me, her fears, the liveliness of her imagination and the wretched state of her health; the police swoop and my arrest must have given her a great shock. She had already heard the noise and I found her sitting on her bed, listening in fear, when I entered her room at that extraordinary hour.

*‘Oh, dear God!’* she cried: *‘are you ill? Oh, dear God, what is it? What is it?’* And she took to trembling. I embraced her, barely restraining my tears, and said: *‘It is nothing, they have sent for me to take my statement as a witness to some business concerning a censorship trial. It will all be finished in a few hours, and I will return to dine with you.’*

The agent had remained by the open door; he saw this scene, and as I placed myself in his hands once more, I said: *‘You see, Sir, the effects of your morning visit.’* I crossed the courtyard with my escort; three of them climbed into the cab with me, the rest of the squad accompanied the prisoner on foot and we arrived without delay in the courtyard of the Prefecture of Police.

The gaoler who ought to have admitted me to a holding cell was not up yet; they woke him by knocking on his wicket, and he went off to prepare my residence. While he was occupied with his work, I walked to and fro in the yard with Monsieur Léotaud who was guarding me. He spoke to me amicably, since he was very honest, saying: *‘Monsieur le Vicomte, it is a great honor to meet you; I presented arms before you several times when you were a Minister and you came to see the King: I served in the Bodyguards: but there it is! I have a wife and children; one must live! – You are right, Monsieur Leotard: how much does it bring in? – Ah! Monsieur le Vicomte, that depends on the prisoners...There are bonuses, sometimes good, sometimes poor, as in war.’*

During my stroll, I saw agents in various disguises like maskers on Ash Wednesday on the slopes of the Courtille: they came to give their account of their deeds during the night. Some were dressed as greengrocers, street criers, coal vendors, market porters, traders in second-hand clothes, rag and bone men, and organ-grinders; others were wearing wigs, from beneath which poked hair of a different color; others had beards, moustaches and false sideburns; others limped along as respectable cripples wearing a bright red ribbon in their buttonholes. They vanished into a little courtyard, and soon re-appeared in different costume, without moustaches, beards, sideburns, wigs, baskets, wooden legs, and arms in slings; this whole flock of police birds flew off at dawn and vanished with the rising sun. My cell was ready, the gaoler came to tell us so, and Monsieur Léotaud, doffing his hat, led me to the door of my honest lodging and, as he left me in the hands of the gaoler and his helpers, said: *‘Monsieur le Vicomte, I have been honored in welcoming you: till we meet again.’* The door closed behind me. Preceded by the gaoler who

carried the keys and his two lads who followed me to prevent me turning back, I reached the second floor by a narrow stairway. A dark little corridor led me to a door; the keeper opened it: I followed him into my cell. He asked me if I needed anything: I replied that I would like breakfast in an hour. He advised me there was a kitchen which furnished prisoners with all they could wish, at a price. I asked my gaoler to have me sent some tea, and if possible, hot and cold water and napkins. I gave him twenty francs in advance: he withdrew respectfully promising to return.

Left alone, I inspected my prison: it was a little longer than it was wide, and its height was seven or eight feet. The walls, discolored and bare, were sprinkled with prose and verse by my predecessors and especially with scribbles by a woman who gave the '*Centre Ground*' plenty of abuse. A pallet with dirty sheets occupied half the lodging; a plank, supported by two wooden brackets, set against the wall, two feet above the bed, served as a wardrobe for the detainee's linen, boots and shoes; a chair and a vile appurtenance comprised the rest of the furnishings.

My faithful guard brought me the napkins and jugs of water I had asked for; I begged him to take away the dirty sheets, the blanket of yellow wool, to remove the bucket whose smell was choking me, and to sweep out my cell after swilling it down. All the works of the '*Centre Ground*' having departed, I shaved; I washed myself with water from my jug, and changed my linen, Madame de Chateaubriand having given me a small supply; I laid out all my possessions on the plank above the bed, as in a cabin on board ship. When that was done, my breakfast arrived and I took my tea at my *well-scrubbed* table which I covered with a white napkin. Someone arrived shortly to remove the utensils from my morning feast and left me alone duly imprisoned.

My cell was lit only by a window-grill which opened at a height; I placed my table beneath this grill and climbed on the table to get some air and enjoy the light. Through the bars of my thief's cage I could see a courtyard or rather a narrow shadowy passage, the darkened buildings around it aquiver with bats. I heard the clinking of keys and chains, the sound of policemen and spies, the tread of soldiers, the movement of weapons, shouts, laughter, the wild songs of my fellow prisoners, curses from Benoît, condemned to death for murdering his mother and his lover. I distinguished these words of Benoit's among his confused cries of fear and repentance: '*Oh My mother, my poor mother!*' I saw the reverse side of society, the pleas of humanity, and the hideous machines that move the world.

I thank the men of letters, the great partisans of freedom of the Press, who formerly took me as their leader and fought under my command; without them, I would have ended my life without knowing what prison was like, and would have missed the experience. I recognize in that delicate attention the genius, goodness, generosity, honor and bravery of the leading writers. But after all, what did this brief trial amount to? Tasso spent years in a dungeon, yet I complain! No; I have not the pride or foolishness to compare my few hours of discomfort with the lengthy sacrifices of those immortal victims whose names history has preserved.

Moreover, I was not at all unhappy; the spirit of greatness past and a glory thirty years old never troubled me; but my *Muse* of yesteryear, all poor and unknown, came shining to embrace me through the window: she was charmed by my residence and inspired; she found me as she had seen me in my London poverty, when the first idea of René entered my mind. What should we create, that solitary from Pindus and I? A song on the lines of that of the unfortunate poet Lovelace who, in the prisons of the English Commonwealth, sang of King Charles I, his master? No; a prisoner's voice would have seemed a poor

augury for my little King Henri V: hymns to misfortune should be addressed from the foot of the altar. So I did not sing of the crown fallen from an innocent brow; I contented myself with speaking of another crown, also pale, placed on a young girl's coffin; I remembered Élisabeth Frisell, whose funeral I had seen the previous day in Passy cemetery. I began some elegiac verses of a Latin epitaph; but then the correct quantity of a word baffled me; quickly I leapt down from the table on which I had been perched, leaning against the bars of the window, and ran to the door on which I beat heavily. The caverns round about echoed; the terrified gaoler ascended followed by two gendarmes; he opened my wicket and I shouted as Santeuil would have done: 'A *Gradus*! A *Gradus*!' The gaoler stared wide-eyed, the gendarmes thought I was revealing the name of one of my accomplices; they would willingly have handcuffed me; I explained; I gave them money to buy the book, and they went off to ask a *Gradus ad Parnassum* of the astonished police.

While they were occupied with my commission, I climbed on my table again, and inspired afresh by my tripod, I set to composing verses for Elisa; but in the midst of my inspired flight, about three o'clock, here came the bailiffs into my cell and apprehended my body on the banks of Permessus: they led me before the examining magistrate who drew up his documents in an obscure office, facing my gaol, on the other side of the courtyard. The magistrate, a young *robe*, well-fed and conceited, asked me the usual questions as to my name, forenames, age, and place of residence. I refused to reply or sign anything, not recognizing the political authority of a government which had on its side neither hereditary right nor popular election, since France had not been consulted and there had been no gathering of any national congress. I was led back to my cell.

At six they brought me my dinner, and I continued to work and re-work the lines of my stanzas in my head, improvising at the same time an air which seemed to me to be quite charming. Madame de Chateaubriand sent me a mattress, bolster, sheets, a cotton blanket, candles and the books I like to read at night. I made my bed singing all the while:

*The coffin is lowered, the roses without stain,*

my romance of the sweet girl and the sweet flower composed itself:

*The coffin is lowered, the roses without stain  
A father placed there, a tribute to his grief;  
Earth, you bore them, hide them now, again,  
Sweet girl, sweet flower.*

*Oh! Do not return them to this world of pain,  
This world, profane, of sorrow and despair;  
Wind will wither them; sun will make them fade,  
Sweet girl, sweet flower.*

*You sleep, my poor Élisabeth, so tender of years,  
No longer burdened by the heat of day!  
You discover a fresher morning here,  
Sweet girl, sweet flower.*

*But Éliſa, your father bends towards your grave;  
From your brow to his the pallor ascends.  
Old oak tree! ...Time uproots the strong and brave,  
Sweet girl, sweet flower!*

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 5

The journey from my thief's lodging to Mademoiselle Gisquet's dressing-room – Achilles de Harlay

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, the end of July 1832.*

I began to undress; the sound of voices was heard; my door opened and the Prefect of Police accompanied by Monsieur Nay, appeared. He made me a thousand excuses for the length of my detention at the station; he informed me that my friends, the Duke of Fitz-James and Baron Hyde de Neuville had been arrested as I had and that, with the log-jam in the Prefecture, no one knew where the people with whom justice was occupied had been placed. 'But,' he added, '*you must come home with me, Monsieur le Vicomte, and choose which room will best suit you.*'

I thanked him and begged him to leave me in my hole; I was already quite charmed by it, as if it were a monk's cell. The Prefect refused my entreaties and was forced to unearth me. I saw those rooms again which I had not seen since the day when Bonaparte's Prefect of Police had asked me to visit so he could invite me to leave Paris. Monsieur and Madame Gisquet opened up all their rooms while begging me to say which one I would occupy. Monsieur Nay proposed to yield me his. I was embarrassed by so much politeness; I accepted a little out-of-the-way room looking onto the garden and which, I think, served as a dressing room for Mademoiselle Gisquet; I was allowed to retain my servant who slept on a mattress outside my door, at the entrance to a narrow stairway down to Madame Gisquet's grand apartment. Another stairway led to the garden; but the latter was forbidden me, and every evening a sentry was posted below by the railing separating the garden from the quay. Madame Gisquet is the nicest woman on earth, and Mademoiselle Gisquet is very pretty and a very competent musician. I had nothing but praise for my hosts' care: they seemed to wish to recompense me for the twelve hours of my initial imprisonment.

The morning after my taking up residence in Mademoiselle Gisquet's dressing room, I rose quite contented, remembering Anacreon's poem on the young Greek girl; I stuck my head out of the window: I could see a little garden, full of greenery, and a high wall hidden by Japanese lacquer-work; on the right, at the end of the garden, were offices where pleasant clerks of the police service could be glimpsed, like lovely nymphs among the lilacs; on the left, the banks of the Seine, the river, and an ancient corner of Paris, in the parish of Saint-André-des-Arts. The sound of Mademoiselle Gisquet's piano reached me mixed with the voices of agents asking for the divisional heads in order to make their reports.

How the whole world changes! This little romantic English garden assigned to the police was a tiny winding fragment of the French garden, its arbors closely pruned, that belonged to the first President of the Parliament of Paris. This ancient garden occupied the site of that parcel of houses which limits the view to the north and west, and extended to the banks of the Seine. It was here after the day of the barricades, that the Duc de Guise came to visit Achille de Harlay: '*He found the first President walking in his garden, who was so little astonished by his arrival that he deigned neither to turn his head nor discontinue the walk he had begun, which being achieved, and he being at the end of the path, he returned, and on returning saw the Duc de Guise advancing towards him; then that grave magistrate, raising his voice, said: 'It is a great pity that the valet has chased his master away; as for the rest, my soul is God's, my heart is my King's, and my body is in the hands of rogues; let them do what they will.'*' The



Achille d'Harlay who walks in the garden today is Monsieur Vidocq, and the Duc de Guise is Coco Lacour; we have exchanged great men for great principles. How free we are these days! Above all how free I was at my window, witness the fine gendarme at the foot of my stairs who was ready to shoot me in flight if I had spread my wings! There were no nightingales in my garden, but there were plenty of lively sparrows, cheeky and quarrelsome, found everywhere, in town and country, palaces and prisons, perching as cheerfully on the instruments of death as on a rose-bush: to those who can fly, what do the sufferings of the earth matter!

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 6

#### The Examining Magistrate – Monsieur Desmortiers

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, the end of July 1832.*

Madame de Chateaubriand obtained permission to see me. She had spent three months, during the Terror, in prison at Rennes with my two sisters Lucile and Julie; her imagination, still sensitive to it, could not bear the idea of prison. My poor wife had a violent attack of nerves on entering the Prefecture, and that was one more thing for which I was obliged to the 'Centre Ground'. On my second day of detention, the examining magistrate, Monsieur Desmortiers, arrived accompanied by his clerk.

Monsieur Guizot had named a certain Monsieur Hello as public prosecutor as the Royal Court of Rennes, a writer and hence envious and irritable as all are who scribble on paper in a victorious cause.

Monsieur Guizot's *protégé*, finding my name and that of Monsieur Hyde de Neuville mixed up in the trial he was pursuing at Nantes against Monsieur Berryer, wrote to the Minister of Justice, saying that if he were in charge, he would lose no time in arresting us and including us in the trial, both as accomplices and exhibits. Monsieur de Montalivet thought he should bow to Monsieur Hello's advice; there had been a time when Monsieur de Montalivet had come to my house, humbly, to seek my advice and ideas on the elections and the freedom of the Press. The Restoration, which made a Peer of Monsieur de Montalivet, could not make a man of him, and that is no doubt why it *sickens* him these days.

Monsieur Desmortiers, the examining magistrate, thus entered my little chamber; his sugary manner hid, like a layer of honey, a tense and violent face.

*'My name it is Loyal, I come from Normandy,  
And I'm Sergeant of the Rod, despite your enmity.'*

Monsieur Desmortiers was formerly of the congregation, a great communicant, a great legitimist, a great partisan of the decrees, and became a fanatical supporter of the Centre Ground. I begged this creature to take a seat with all the politeness of the *ancien régime*; I pulled up an armchair for him; I placed a little table before his clerk, with pen and ink on it; I sat facing Monsieur Desmortiers, and he, in a benign voice, read me the petty accusations which, duly proven, would have tenderly cut my throat: after which, he began his interrogation.

I declared once more that, as I did not recognize the existing political order, I had nothing to say, that I would sign nothing, that all this judicial process was superfluous, that they could spare themselves the effort and go; that, as for the rest, I was always charmed to receive Monsieur Desmortiers. (I set an initial example in refusing to recognize the judges which several Republicans have since followed. *Note: Paris, 1840*)

I saw that this manner of proceeding enraged the saintly man, who, having once shared my opinions, found my conduct made a mockery of his own; to this resentment was added the pride of a magistrate who thinks he is blessed by his function. He wished to argue with me; I could never have made him comprehend the difference between the *social* order and the *political* order. I would submit, I explained to

him, to the former, since it represents natural law; I would obey civil, military and financial laws and those of the police and public order; but I owed no allegiance to political laws except in as much as they derived from Royal authority consecrated by the centuries, or from the sovereignty of the people. I was not stupid enough or devious enough to believe that the nation had been summoned, or consulted, and that the political order established had been the result of a national decision. If I were put on trial for theft, murder, arson or other social crimes and offences, I would respond to justice; but since a political process had been started against me, I had nothing to say to an authority which had no legal power, and in consequence, nothing to demand of me.

A fortnight passed away in this manner. Monsieur Desmortiers, whose fury I detected (a fury which he tried to communicate to the judges), tackled me with a confiding air, saying: *‘So you will not even tell me your illustrious name?’* During one of his interrogations, he read me a letter from Charles X to the Duke of Fitz-James, in which there was a phrase honoring myself. *‘Well, Sir,’* I said, *‘what does this letter signify? It is widely known that I remain loyal to my former King, and that I did not take the oath to Philippe. Apart from that, I am deeply moved by this letter of my exiled sovereign’s. In the course of his prosperity, he never said anything similar to me, and that sentence rewards me for all my efforts.’*

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 7

My life at Monsieur Gisquet's – I am set at liberty

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, the end of July 1832.*

Madame Récamier, to whom so many prisoners have owed consolation and deliverance, was brought to my new retreat. Monsieur de Béranger came over from Passy to tell me in song, during his friends' rule, what it was like to be in gaol during that of mine: he could not have thrown the Restoration in my face more harshly. My great friend Monsieur Bertin came to administer the ministerial sacraments; an enthusiastic lady hastened from Beauvais in order to *admire* my glory; Monsieur Villemain performed a courageous action; Monsieur Dubois, Monsieur Ampère, Monsieur Lenormant, my wise and generous young friends, did not forget me; the Republican defence lawyer, Monsieur Charles Ledru, did not forsake me: in hopes of a trial, he exaggerated the affair, and would have foregone all his fees to have had the pleasure of defending me.

Monsieur Gisquet had made me free of all of his rooms, as I mentioned; but I did not abuse the privilege. Only on a single evening did I descend to listen, while seated between him and his wife, to Mademoiselle Gisquet playing the piano. Her father scolded her and pretended that she had not played the sonata as well as usual. This little concert given by my host, *en famille*, with only myself as audience, was quite singular. While this pastoral scene was played out in fireside intimacy, police officers kept me away from my colleagues with blows from rifle butts and steel-tipped batons; yet what peace and harmony reigned in the policemen's hearts!

I had the happiness of being able to enlist a favor, the favor of prison, similar to the one which I enjoyed, on behalf of Monsieur Charles Philippon; condemned for his talent to some months in detention, he was spending them in a sanatorium at Chaillot; summoned to Paris as a trial witness, he profited from the occasion and did not return to his lodgings; but he repented of it: in his hiding place, he was no longer free to see his child whom he loved: he regretted his prison, and not knowing how to return to it, he wrote me the following letter begging me to negotiate the thing with my host:

*'Sir,*

*You are a prisoner and will understand, or you would not be Chateaubriand...I am a prisoner too, a voluntary prisoner, since placing myself in a state of siege at a friend's house, a poor artist like myself. I wished to flee the justice of the military tribunal with which I was threatened by the seizure of my newspaper on the 9th of this month. But, in order to remain in hiding, I have foregone the embraces of a child I idolize, an adopted daughter aged five, my joy and delight. This deprivation is a torment which I cannot long endure, it is death to me! I will give myself up, and they will throw me in Sainte-Pélagie, where I can only see my poor child infrequently, if they will still allow it, and only at set times, and where I will tremble for her health, and die of anxiety, if I cannot see her every day.*

*I, a whole-hearted Republican, address myself to you, Sir, a Legitimist, a serious man and a parliamentarian, I a caricaturist and a partisan of the most incisive political character, address you whom I do not know and who are a prisoner like myself, begging you to ask the Prefect of Police if he will let me return to the sanatorium to which they transferred me. I engage on my honor to present myself*

*whenever I am required and I renounce any attempt to escape whatever tribunal there may be, if they will leave my poor child with me.*

*You will believe me, Sir, when I speak of honor and swear not to flee, and I am sure you will be my advocate, though the deepest politicians might see there a fresh proof of alliance between Legitimist and Republicans, men whose opinions match so well.*

*If my request is refused to such a guest, such an advocate, I will know I have nothing more to hope, and that I must be separated from my poor Emma for nine months.*

*Whatever, Sir, may be the result of your generous intervention, my thanks will be no less eternal, since I have no doubts of the urgent solicitations which your heart will suggest to you.*

*Accept, Sir, the expression of my sincere admiration and believe me your very humble and very devoted servant.*

CH. PHILIPPON,

*Proprietor of La Caricature (journal),  
condemned to thirteen months in prison.*

*Paris, the 21st of June 1832.'*

I obtained the favor Monsieur Philippon asked for: he thanked me in a note which demonstrates, not the magnitude of the service (which reduced to my client being watched over at Chaillot by a gendarme), but the hidden delights of love, which cannot be truly understood except by those who have felt them.

*'Sir,*

*I leave for Chaillot with my darling child.*

*I wish to thank you, but I feel words are too cold to express the gratitude I feel; I have reason to believe, Sir, that your own heart will suggest some eloquent phrases. I am sure I will not be mistaken in thinking it will inform you that I am not ungrateful, and will portray for you better than I can the storm of happiness in which your goodness has placed me.*

*Accept, I beg you, Sir, my sincerest thanks and deign to regard me as your servant, and the most affectionate of your servants.*

'CHARLES PHILIPPON'

To this singular mark of my credit, I will add this strange witness to my fame: a young employee in Monsieur Gisquet's office addressed some fine verse to me which was passed on to me by Monsieur Gisquet himself; since in the end justice was demanded: if a literate government attacked me nobly, the *Muses* defended me nobly. Monsieur Villemain courageously pronounced in my favor and in the *Journal des Débats* itself my great friend Bertin protested, signing an article against my arrest. Here is what the poet, who signed himself *J. Chopin*, office-worker wrote to me:

*TO MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND  
AT THE POLICE PREFECTURE.*

*Bowing to your genius, I dare  
 To dedicate my lines to thee  
 And bear, a streamlet flowing to the sea,  
 This tribute to the god of metre there.*

*Misfortune now has fallen on your brow  
 Serene as ever in the tempest's blast.*

*What cares the poet for this fleeting Now?  
 Your glory will remain...our hatreds pass.*

*Gracious enemy, your voice, its power,  
 Have even lent a charm to error,  
 Yet your eloquence at such an hour  
 Absolves your heart of it forever.*

*A King struck once before at your freedom;  
 You showed, at his severity,  
 Your greatness: he fell: and is gone,  
 Yet you see only his misery!*

*Oh, who could sound your endless loyalty  
 And force the tide to turn aside again?  
 But while one party may applaud your zeal,  
 Your glory is for all...take back your pen.*

*J. CHOPIN,  
 Office-worker.*

Mademoiselle Naomi (I think that is Mademoiselle Gisquet's Christian name) often walked alone in the little garden book in hand. She would steal a glance towards my window. How sweet to have been delivered from my chains, as in Cervantes, by my gaoler's daughter! While I was taking the romantic air, young and handsome Monsieur Nay came to dissipate my dream. I saw him talking with Mademoiselle Gisquet in that manner which cannot deceive us, we creatures of other *sylyphs*. I fell from my clouds, closed the window and abandoned the idea of letting my white moustaches be blown about by the winds of adversity.

After a fortnight, a decree dismissing the case set me at liberty on the 30th of June, to Madame de Chateaubriand's great happiness: she would have died, I fear, if my detention had continued. She came in a cab to fetch me; I filled it with my bit of luggage so swiftly that I was already leaving the Ministry, and I returned to the Rue d'Enfer with *that something achieved which misfortune grants to virtue*.

If Monsieur Gisquet is known to posterity through history, perhaps he has arrived there in a sorry enough state; I desire what I have just written about him to serve as a counter-balance on behalf of a renowned enemy. I have nothing but praise for his kind attentions: Doubtless, if I had been condemned he would not have let me escape, but he and his family treated me with the propriety, the good grace, the sense of my position, of who I was and had been, that an educated administration had not shown, nor lawyers all the more brutal in that they acted against the weak and showed no fear.

Of all the governments which France has suffered in forty years, that of Philippe is the only one that has thrown me in gaol; it placed its hand on my head, on a head respected even by an angry conqueror; Napoleon lifted his arm but did not strike. And why that anger? I will tell you: I dared to protest in favor of right, against the tide of events, in a country in which I demanded liberty under the Empire, and glory under the Restoration; in a country where I alone take account not of brothers, sisters, children, joys, pleasures, but of graves. The recent political changes have parted me from my friends: some have gone on to make their fortunes, and they pass by my poverty swollen with dishonour; others have abandoned their homes exposed to insult. The generation so greatly in love with freedom has been sold: mean in their conduct, intolerable in their pride, mediocre or foolish in their writings, I expect nothing but disdain from that generation and I return it in kind; they have nothing about them that I understand, they know nothing of loyalty to a given oath, love of generous institutions, respect for one's own opinion, scorn of success or gold, the felicity of sacrifice, the religion of weakness and misfortune.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 8

A letter to the Justice Minister and his reply.

*Paris, the end of July 1832.*

After the decree dismissing the case, I was left with one duty to fulfil. The offence of which I had been accused was linked to that for which Monsieur Berryer had been detained in Nantes. I had been unable to explain this to the examining magistrate since I had refused to recognize the tribunal's competence. In order to repair the damage my silence may have caused Monsieur Berryer, I wrote the letter you are about to read, to the Minister of Justice, and made it public through the newspapers.

*'Paris, this 3rd of July 1832.*

*Monsieur le Ministre de la Justice,*

*Allow me, in writing to you, to fulfil a duty of conscience and honor in the interests of a man who has been deprived of his liberty for too long.*

*Monsieur Berryer the Younger, during his interrogation by the examining magistrate in Nantes on the 18th of last month, replied: That he had seen Madame la Duchesse de Berry; that he had advised her with the respect due to her rank, her courage and her misfortunes, of his personal opinions and that of his honorable friends regarding the present situation in France, and on the consequences of her Royal Highness' presence in the West.*

*Monsieur Berryer, expanding on this vast subject with his usual skill, had summarized it for her in this way: No war, foreign or civil, even supposing it crowned with success, can suppress or rally opinion.*

*Questioned about the honorable friends of whom he had just spoken, Monsieur Berryer said markedly: That serious men having maintained in the present circumstances an opinion in agreement with his own, he had thought it a duty to support his advice with their authority; but that he could not name them without their consent.*

*Monsieur le Ministre de Justice, I am one of those people Monsieur Berryer consulted. Not only did I approve his advice, but I even wrote a letter construed in that sense. It would have been handed to Madame la Duchesse de Berry, in the event that the Princess had really been on French soil, which I did not believe to be the case. That first note being unsigned, I wrote a second which I signed and in which I begged that intrepid mother of Henri IV's scion, with more insistence, to leave a land split by such discord.*

*Such is the statement I owe Monsieur Berryer. The true guilt, if there is guilt, is mine. This statement will serve I hope to initiate a prompt deliverance for the prisoner of Nantes; it will only leave the burden of a deed weighing on my head which was innocent without doubt, but whose consequences, in the final result, I accept completely.*

*I have the honor to be, etc.*

CHATEAUBRIAND



84, Rue d'Enfer-Saint-Michel

*Having written to Monsieur le Comte de Montalivet, on the 9th of last month, regarding the affairs of Monsieur Berryer, Monsieur le Ministre de l'Interieur did not even think it necessary to let me know he had received my letter; as I am greatly concerned to learn the fate of this one, which I have the honor to write to Monsieur le Ministre de Justice today, I would be infinitely obliged to him if he would have his office acknowledge its receipt.*

CH.'

The Justice Minister's reply was prompt; here it is:

*'Paris, the 3rd of July.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*The letter which you have addressed to me, containing information which may aid the course of justice, I have had sent on immediately to the King's Prosecutor on the Nantes tribunal, so that it may be included in the evidence in the case that has commenced against Monsieur Berryer.*

*I am with respect, etc.,*

*Keeper of the Seal,*

BARTHE'

By this response Monsieur Barthe graciously reserved the right to institute fresh proceedings against me. I remember the proud disdain of the great men of the 'Centre Ground' when I let slip the possibility of violence against myself or my writings. What! Goodness, why ward off imaginary dangers? Who could be embarrassed by my opinions? Who would dream of touching a single hair of my head? Friends and supporters of the cooking-pot, intrepid heroes of peace at any price, nevertheless you must own to *your Terror*, that of the police and the law, your Paris under siege, your thousand Press trials, your military commission to condemn the author of *Cancans* to death; you still plunged me into gaol; the punishment applicable to my crime was nothing less than capital punishment. It would have been a pleasure to lose my head, if, thrown into the scales of justice, that might have tilted them towards the side of honor, glory and my country's freedom!

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 9

Charles X offers to pay me a Peer's pension: my response

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, end of July 1832.*

I was more than ever determined to resume my exile; Madame de Chateaubriand, frightened by my adventure, already wished to be far away; it was not a question of deciding where to pitch our tents. The great difficulty was to find enough money to live in a foreign land and firstly to pay my debts which were attracting threats of pursuit and seizure.

The first year of an Embassy always ruins the Ambassador: that is what happened to me in Rome. I resigned at the advent of Polignac's Ministry, and had added to my usual poverty sixty thousand francs in loans. I knocked at all the Royalist banks, none opened to me: I was advised to try Monsieur Lafitte. Monsieur Lafitte advanced me ten thousand francs which I immediately gave to my most hard-pressed creditors. From the proceeds of my pamphlets I recovered that amount which I repaid him with thanks; but thirty thousand francs still remained unpaid besides my old debts, some of which had grown beards they were so aged; unfortunately those beards were golden ones, whose annual trim came from my chin.

Monsieur le Duc de Lévis, returning from his trip to Scotland, told me on behalf of Charles X that the Prince wished to resume paying me a Peer's pension; I thought I should refuse the offer. The Duc de Lévis returned to the issue when he saw that on leaving prison I was in the deepest embarrassment, gaining nothing by my house and garden in the Rue d'Enfer, and harassed by a swarm of creditors. I had already sold my silverware. The Duc de Lévis brought me twenty thousand francs, telling me in a noble manner that it was merely the two years of income which the King realized he owed me, and that my debts in Rome were simply debts of the Crown. That sum set me free, and I accepted it as a temporary loan, writing the King the following letter (You will read about my conversation with Charles X on the subject of this loan during my first trip to Prague. *Note*: Paris, 1834):

‘Sire,

*In the midst of the disasters with which it has pleased God to sanctify your life, you have not forgotten those who suffer at the foot of Saint-Louis' throne. You deigned, some months ago, to convey to me your generous suggestion of resuming my Peer's pension which I renounced on refusing to take the oath to an illegitimate power; I know Your Majesty has servants poorer than I am and worthier of your kindness. But the last works I published have caused me difficulties and have excited persecution; I have tried in vain to sell the few things I possess. I am forced therefore to accept, not the annual pension which Your Majesty proposes I should levy on Royal poverty, but a temporary aid to free me from the embarrassments which prevent my regaining a sanctuary where I might live by my own labor. Sire, I must be very unfortunate to have become a burden, for even a moment, on the Crown which I have supported with all my efforts and which I will continue to serve for the rest of my life.*

*I am with the profoundest respect, etc.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 10

A note from Madame la Duchesse de Berry – A letter to Béranger – Departure from Paris

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, 1st to the 8th of August 1832.*

My nephew Count Louis de Chateaubriand, for his part, advanced me a similar sum of twenty thousand francs. Thus freed of material obstacles I made preparations for my second departure. But a matter of honor restrained me: Madame la Duchesse de Berry was on French soil; what would become of her, and should I not stay in the country to which her perils might summon me? A note from the Princess which arrived from the depths of the Vendée served to set me free.

*'I am writing to you, Monsieur le Vicomte, regarding that provisional government, which I had thought to form when I was ignorant as to when, and even if, I might return to France, and in which I was told you had consented to take part. It did not in fact exist, since it never met, and some of its members only agreed in order to offer me advice which I could not follow. I am not at all ungrateful to them for it. You judged, according to the report made to you, my situation, and that of those regions which have better reason than I to understand the effects of a fatal influence, in a manner which I did not choose to accept, and I am sure that if Monsieur de Chateaubriand had been with me, his noble and generous heart would have equally rejected it. I nonetheless rely on the good offices of various individuals and even on the advice of people who formed part of the provisional government, the choice of whom was dictated by their known zeal and devotion to the Legitimacy in the person of Henri V. I hear that it is still your intention to leave France, and I would regret it greatly if I were able to draw you closer to me; yet you have weapons which strike from a distance and I hope you will not cease to fight for Henri V.*

*Believe wholly, Monsieur le Vicomte, in my esteem and friendship.*

*M.C.R'*

In this note, Madame neglected my services to her, and accepted nothing of the advice I had dared to give her in the note of which Monsieur Berryer had been the bearer; she even seemed a little wounded by it, even though she recognized that a *fatal influence* had lead her astray.

Thus, set at liberty and disengaged from everything, today the 7th of August, having nothing left to do but go, I wrote a farewell letter to Monsieur de Béranger, who had visited me in prison.

*'Paris, the 7th of August 1832.*

*To Monsieur de Béranger,*

*Sir, I wish to say farewell and to thank you for remembering me; time is short and I am forced to leave without having the pleasure of seeing and embracing you. I am ignorant of the future: is there an obvious future for anyone these days? We are not in an age of revolution, but of social transformation: now, transformations take place slowly, and the generations which are part of the period of metamorphosis perish wretchedly and obscurely. If Europe (as she may well be) is in an age of decrepitude that is another matter: she will produce nothing, and will fade away in an impotent chaos of passions, morals and doctrines. In that case, Sir, you will have sung over a tomb.*

*I have fulfilled all my engagements, Sir: I returned to your singing; I have defended what I came to defend; I have survived the cholera: I am returning to the mountains. Do not break your lyre as you threatened; I owe to it one of my most glorious titles to human remembrance. Keep France smiling and weeping: since, by a secret you alone know, it seems that in your popular songs the words are happy yet the music is plaintive.*

*I recommend myself to your friendship, and to your Muse.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

I am to set out tomorrow. Madame de Chateaubriand will join me at Lucerne.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 11

#### Journal from Paris to Lugano

*Basel, 12th of August 1832.*

Many men die without losing sight of their neighboring steeple; I cannot find the steeple which will see my death, In quest of a sanctuary in which to finish my *Memoirs*, I set off again, dragging behind me an enormous trunk full of papers, diplomatic correspondence, confidential notes, and letters from Ministers and Kings; it was *History* carried pillion by *Romance*.

I saw Monsieur Augustin Thierry at Vesoul, in retirement at his brother the Prefect's house. As he has previously sent me, in Paris, his *History of the Norman Conquest*, I went to thank him. I found a youngish man in a room with half-closed blinds; he was almost blind; he tried to rise to welcome me, but his legs no longer bore his weight and he fell into my arms. He blushed when I expressed my sincere admiration for him: it was then that he told me that his work was based on mine, and that it had been while reading the Battle of the Franks in *Les Martyrs* that he conceived the idea of a new way of writing history. When I took my leave of him, he tried hard to follow me and dragged himself as far as the door by leaning on the wall: I left moved by so much talent and such misfortune.

Via Vesoul, Charles X, had returned after his long exile, he who was now making sail towards a fresh exile which would be his last.

I passed the frontier without incident with all my clutter: let us see whether, on the far side of the Alps, I cannot enjoy Swiss freedom and Italian sun, needed by my opinions and my years.

On entering Basel, I encountered an old Swiss, a customs officer; he made me undergo un *bedit garandaine d'in quart d'hire*: a little quarantine for a quarter of an hour; my luggage was taken into a cavern; something was set in motion which sounded like a loom down below; a smell of vinegar arose, and thus free of French contagion, the good Swiss released me.

I said, in the *Itinerary*, while speaking of the storks of Athens: '*From the heights of their nests, that revolution cannot touch, they saw the human race changing beneath them: while impious generations rose on the tombs of religious generations, the young storks always fed their aged fathers.*'

I found a stork's nest at Basel which I had left behind six years previously; but the hospital on whose roof the stork had built its nest was no Parthenon, and the sun over the Rhine is not that which shines on the Cephisus, the Council House is not the Aeropagus. Erasmus is not Pericles: yet there is something Roman and Germanic about the Rhine, the Black Forest, and Basel. Louis XIV extended the borders of France to the gates of this city, and three hostile monarchs passed through it in 1813 in order to sleep in Louis le Grand's bed, defended in vain by Napoleon. Let us go and view Holbein's *The Dance of Death*; it expresses human vanity.

The Dance of Death (if there was not already an accurate painting of it by then) took place in Paris, in 1424, in the Cemetery of the Innocents: it came to us from England. The representation of the spectacle was set down in fresco paintings; they were on view in the cemeteries of Dresden, Lübeck, Minden,

La Chaise-Dieu, Strasbourg, and Blois in France, and Holbein's pen immortalized those funereal delights in Basel.

These *danses macabres* by great artists have in turn been carried off by Death, who spares not its own follies: of the work in Basel there only remain six truncated sections, on the walls of the cloister and deposited in the University library. A watercolor has preserved the overall design of the work.

These grotesques, in essence terrifying, have a Shakespearean quality, a mixture of the comic and the tragic. The characters display vivid expressions: rich and poor, young and old, men and women, Popes, Cardinals, priests, Emperors, Kings, Queens, Princes, Dukes, nobles, magistrates, soldiers, all struggle and argue with and against Death; none accept it with a good grace.

Death is infinitely varied, but always a farce like life, which is merely a grave comedy. This Death satirically painted is minus a leg like the wooden-legged beggar he accosts; he affects a mandolin at his bony back, like the musician he drags along. He is not always bald; strands of hair, blond, brown, grey hang down the skeleton's neck making it more dreadful by rendering it more lifelike. In one of the panels Death almost has flesh, is almost a young man, and carries a young girl away with him who gazes at herself in a mirror. In his satchel Death has a schoolboy's jeering tricks: he cuts a cord with scissors by which a dog leads its blind owner, and the blind man is two steps away from an open ditch; elsewhere, Death in a little cloak, approaches one of his victims with satirical gestures, like a Pasquin. Holbein was able to capture the idea of the very essence of this tremendous mockery: in reliquaries skulls always seem to be smirking because their teeth are revealed; it is a smile without lips to frame it and form the smile. What do they smile at: nothingness, or life?

Basel Cathedral pleased me, and especially the ancient cloisters. Walking around the latter, dense with funeral inscriptions, I found the names of various reformers. Protestantism chose its time and place badly when it located itself among Catholic monuments; what it has reformed is less visible than what it has destroyed. Those dry pedants who thought to recreate primitive Christianity, within a Christianity that has molded society for fifteen centuries, proved unable to erect a single monument. What would such a monument have echoed? How could it relate to its time? Men in the age of Luther and Calvin were not made like Luther and Calvin; they were formed like Leo X with the spirit of Raphael, or Saint Louis with a Gothic spirit; a minority believed in nothing, the majority believed in everything. Has not Protestantism for temples only schoolrooms, and for churches the cathedrals it has devastated? There its nakedness is revealed. Jesus Christ and his apostles doubtless failed to resemble the Greek and Romans of their era, but they did not come to reform an ancient religion; they came to establish a new religion, to replace gods by the One God.

Lucerne, 14th of August 1832.

The road from Basel to Lucerne through Aargau, offers a series of valleys some of which resemble the valley of Argèles, without the skies of the Spanish Pyrenees. At Lucerne, mountains variously grouped, tinted, stacked in tiers, outlined against the heavens, end by retiring behind one another and vanishing into the distance, in the neighboring snows of Saint Gothard. If you removed Mount Rigi and Mount Pilatus, but retained the hills clothed with greenery and fir trees which immediately border the Lake of the Four Cantons (*Lake Lucerne*), you would create an Italian lake.

The arcades of the cemetery cloister with which the Cathedral is surrounded are like boxes from which you enjoy this view. The cemetery monuments have as standard a little iron cross carrying a gilded Christ. In the sun's rays they are like so many points of light escaping from the tombs; at intervals there are fonts of holy water in which branches are soaking with which one can bless the ashes of the departed. I wept for no one in particular there, but I made the purifying dew descend on that silent community of unfortunate Christians, my brothers. One epitaph told me: *Hodie mihi, cras tibi: I today, you tomorrow*; another: *Fuit homo: this was a man*; another: *Siste Viator, abi, viator: stop passer-by; go passer-by*. And I wait on tomorrow; and shall have been a man; and passer-by I halt; and passing by I go. Leaning against an arcade of the cloister, I gazed for hours at William Tell's and his companions' theatre of action: the theatre of Helvetic freedom so well sung and pictured by Schiller and Johannes von Müller. My eyes searched that vast picture for the presence of the most illustrious dead, and my feet trampled the ashes of the most anonymous of them.

Seeing the Alps again four or five years ago, I asked myself what I had come for: how would I answer today? How would I answer tomorrow or the next day? Pity me who cannot grow old and is forever ageing!

Lucerne, 15th of August 1832.

The Capuchins have gone this morning, according to custom on this Day of Assumption, to bless the mountains. These monks profess the religion under whose protection Swiss independence was born: that independence still endures. What will become of our modern liberty, cursed as it is by the blessings of philosophers and executioners? It is only forty years old and has already been sold and re-sold, rigged out and traded on every street-corner. There is more freedom in a Capuchin's habit as he blesses the Alps than in all the frippery of the legislators of the Republic, Empire, and Restoration, and the Usurpation of July.

The French traveller in Switzerland is moved and saddened; our history, to the misfortune of the people of these regions, is linked too closely to their history; Swiss blood has flowed for us and through us; we have borne fire and the sword into William Tell's cottage; we have involved their peasant warriors, who guarded the throne of our kings, in our civil wars. Thorwaldsen's genius has set a remembrance to the 10th of August at the entry to Lucerne. The Swiss lion expires, pierced by an arrow, covering with his lowered head and one of his paws the French escutcheon, of which only a single *fleur-de-lis* is visible. The chapel consecrated to the victims, the clump of green trees which stands near the bas-relief sculpted in the rock, the soldier who escaped the massacre of the 10th of August who shows visitors the monument, the note from Louis XVI ordering the Swiss to lay down their arms, the altar screen offered by Madame la Dauphine to the expiatory chapel, and on which that perfect model of grief embroidered the sacrifice of the Divine Lamb!... By what device of Providence, after the recent fall of the Bourbon throne, have I been led to seek a sanctuary close to this monument? At least I can contemplate it without blushing; I can place my hand, feeble but not perjured, on the escutcheon of France, while the lion grasps it with his powerful claws, though extended in death.

Well, a member of the Diet has proposed to demolish that monument! What does Switzerland want: Freedom? She has enjoyed it for four centuries: Equality? She has it: A Republic? That is her mode of government; the alleviation of taxes? She pays almost no duty. What does she want then? She wants

change: that is human nature. When a nation, altered by time, can no longer remain where it is has been, the first symptom of its malady is hatred of the past and its own ancestral virtues.

I returned from the monument of the 10th of August across a large covered bridge, a sort of wooden gallery suspended above the lake. Two hundred and thirty-eight triangular paintings, placed between the roof-beams, decorate this gallery. They are popular illustrations from which the Swiss, as they pass by, learn the history of their religion and their freedom.

I saw tame water-fowl; I preferred the wild waterfowl on the lake at Combourg.

In the town, the sound of a choir met me; it was emerging from a chapel of the Virgin: entering the chapel, I thought I had been transported back to my childhood. Before four altars, decorated devotedly, women were reciting the rosary and the litanies with the priest. It was like evening prayers at the edge of the sea in my poor Brittany, and I was at the edge of Lake Lucerne! A hand thus raises the two ends of my life in order to make me feel more deeply all that has been lost in the chain of my years.

On Lake Lucerne, 16th of August 1832, noon.

Alps, lower your summits, I am not worthy of you: young, I would have been solitary; old, I am merely isolated, I can still describe nature effectively; but for whom? Who would care about my pictures? What arms, other than those of time, would press my *genius* to a bare brow in recompense? Who would repeat my songs? To what *Muse* would I dedicate them? Beneath the vault of years as beneath that of the snowy peaks around me, no ray of sunlight will come to warm me. How pitiful to drag my weary steps, which no one would follow, over those mountains! What misfortune to find myself free to wander only at the end of my life!

Two p.m.

My boat reached the jetty of a house on the right-hand shore of the lake, before the entrance to the Bay of Uri. I climbed through the orchard below this inn and am sitting beneath two walnut trees which shelter a cow-shed. Before me, a little to the right, on the opposite shore of the lake, spreads the village of Schwytz, among orchards, and the smooth slopes of those pastures called *alps* in this country: it is overlooked by a semi-circle of jagged rock whose two peaks the *Mythen* and the *Haken* (the Mitre and the Cross) take their names from their form. This horned cornice sits above the meadows, like the enduring crown of Swiss freedom on the brow of a nation of shepherds. The silence around me is only interrupted by the little tinkling bells on the necks of two heifers penned in a nearby stall: they seem to me to sound the glory of the pastoral liberty that Schwytz has given, with its name, to a whole nation: a little canton in the neighborhood of Naples, called *Italia*, likewise, but with less sacred rights, gave its name to the land of the Romans.

Three p.m.

We are leaving; we are entering the Bay or Lake of Uri. The mountains rise higher and darker. Here is Grutli's grassy rump and the three springs where Fürst, Melchtal and Stauffacher swore independence for their country; here, at the foot of the Achsenberg, is the chapel which marks the place where Tell, leaping from Gessler's boat, drove it into the waves with a blow from his foot.



But did Tell and his companions really exist? Are they not Northern characters, born from the chants of the Skalds, and of whom the heroic tradition is found on Swedish shores? Are the Swiss today what they were at the time when they won their freedom? Those bear trails, those *rocks of groaning* (hackenmesser: heel-cutters) see carriages roll by where Tell and his companions leapt, crossbow in hand, from precipice to precipice: am I a traveller myself in harmony with these places?

Luckily a storm has just assailed me. We land in an inlet, a few steps from Tell's chapel: it is ever the One God who raises the winds, and our trust in that same God which reassures men. As before, crossing the Ocean, the American Lakes, and the waters off Greece, and Syria, I wrote on sopping-wet paper. The clouds, the waves, the claps of thunder combine more fittingly with Alpine liberty than the voice, effeminate and degenerate in nature, that my century has lodged in my throat despite me.

Altdorf.

Disembarking at Flüelen, and reaching Altdorf, a lack of horses detains me at the foot of the Bannberg for the night. Here, William Tell shot the apple from his son's head: the bow-shot was the distance which separates these two springs. Let us believe it, despite the same story being told by Saxo Grammaticus, which I first cited in my *Essai sur les Révolutions*; let us have faith in religion and liberty, the only two things regarding humanity that are great: glory and power are brilliant, not great.

Tomorrow, from the heights of the Saint-Gothard, I will greet that Italy again that I greeted from the summit of the Simplon and Mont-Cenis. But what good is this last glance at the regions of the south and the dawn! The pine-tree, among glaciers, cannot go down to the orange-trees he sees below him in the flower-filled valleys.

Ten at night.

The storm begins again; lightning twists among the rocks; echoes increase and prolong the noise of thunder; the roar of the River Reuss and of the Schächen torrent welcomes the Armorican bard. It is a long while since I have been free and alone; no one else in the room I am enclosed by: two beds for an ageing traveller who has neither love to cradle, nor dreams to make. These mountains, this storm, this night are treasures lost to me. What life, though, I feel in the depths of my soul! Never, not even when the most ardent blood pulsed from my heart to my veins, have I uttered the language of passion with such energy as I could achieve at this moment. It seems to me I see my *sylph* of the Combours woods emerging from the flanks of the Saint-Gothard. Do you seek me once more, delightful phantom of my youth? Have you taken pity on me? You see, I am only altered in face; ever dreaming, devoured by a fire without cause, without fuel. I am leaving the world, and I entered it as I created you, in a moment of ecstasy and delirium. This is the hour when I invoke you in turn. I will open my window then, to let you enter. If you are not content with the graces I blessed you with, I will make you a hundred times more seductive; my palette is not exhausted; I have seen more of beauty and know better how to paint it. Come and sit on my knee; do not be frightened by my grey hairs, caress them with your fingers, those of a fairy or a shade; let them darken again under your kisses. This brain, which these falling locks do not calm, is as foolish as it was when I gave you being, eldest daughter of my illusions, sweet fruit of my secret passions and my first solitude! Come, let us climb through the clouds, together still; we will travel with the lightening, crisscrossing, illuminating, flaring above the precipices where tomorrow I will go. Come! Carry me with you as before, and never bring me back.

There is a knock at the door; it is not you! It is the guide! The horses are here, we must leave. Of this dream, only the wind and rain remain, and I, a dream without end, an eternal storm.

17th of August 1832 (Amsteg)

From Altdorf to here, a narrow valley between mountains, as one sees everywhere: the Reuss roaring in its midst. At the Stag Inn, a young German student coming from the glaciers of the Rhône, said to me: *'Du com from Altdorf zis morning? Qvick vork!'* He thought I was on foot like him; then, seeing my wagon with its bench-seats: *'Oh! Horzes! That's anodder ting.'* if the student had wished to exchange his young limbs for my wagon and worse still my chariot of glory, with what pleasure I would have accepted his stick, his grey tunic, and golden hair. I would cross the Rhône glaciers; I would speak the language of Schiller to my mistress, and I would dream deep on German liberty; he would travel, aged like the times, bored like the dead, disillusioned by experience, having round his neck, like a bell, a fame which he will be more weary of after a quarter of an hour than the Reuss in torrent. The exchange will not take place; those goods are not for me. My scholar is leaving; he speaks to me while doffing and replacing his German cap, with a little nod of the head: *'Permit me!'* Then, a shade, he vanishes. The scholar does not know my name; he will have met me, and never know it: I am delighted with that idea: I aspire to the shadows with more ardor than I once wished for the light: the latter irks me either by illuminating my miseries or by showing me objects I can no longer enjoy: I hasten to pass the torch to my neighbor.

Three little boys drawing their crossbows: William Tell and Gessler are everywhere. Free nations retain memories of the source of their independence. Ask a little ragamuffin in France if he has ever thrown an axe in memory of King *Hlowigh* or *Khlowig* or is it Clovis!

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 12

#### The Saint-Gothard Pass

The new Saint-Gothard road, on leaving Amsteg, weaves to and fro in a zigzag for six miles; now joining the Reuss, now moving away as the torrent's ravine widens. In the perpendicular plane of the landscape, short slopes or clumps of coppiced beech, peaks rising into the blue, ice-covered domes, summits naked or retaining a few streaks of snow like locks of white hair; in the valley, bridges, huts of blackened timber, walnut and fruit trees which gain in a wealth of leaves and branches what they lose in the succulence of their fruit. Alpine nature forces these trees to return to the wild; the ancient sap reveals itself despite the graft: an inner energy breaks the bounds of civilization.

A little higher, on the right bank of the Reuss, the scene changes: the river descends in falls through a stony channel, under a double and triple avenue of pines, forming the Pont-d'Espagne valley at Cauterets. On sections of the mountain, larches clothe ridges of broken rock; moored by their roots, they resist the buffeting of storms.

Along the roadside, only a few patches of earth given over to potatoes testify to the presence of man: he must eat and journey; a summary of his history. There is no sign of the herds, relegated to higher regions of pasture: no birds; no likelihood of eagles: the great eagle plunged into the ocean in crossing to St Helena; there is no flight however strong and high that does not fail in the immensity of the heavens, The royal eaglet has just died. Other eaglets of July 1830 have been proclaimed; apparently they have descended from their eyrie to nest among the pigeons. They no longer rise with chamois in their talons; reduced to a domesticated gleam, their flickering gaze will no longer contemplate the free glittering sun of France's glory from the summit of Saint-Gothard.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 13

#### The Schöllenen Gorge – Devil's Bridge

Having crossed the *Priest's Leap* bridge, and rounded the hillock of Wasen village, the right bank of the Reuss is regained; on either side waterfalls show white among the grassy slopes extending like green tapestries above the traveler's head. Through a defile you can see the Ranz glacier which is linked to the glaciers of the Furca.

Finally, you enter the Schöllenen Gorge, where the first ascent of the Saint-Gothard begins. The valley is a two thousand foot steeple cut in a sheer granite block. The faces of the block form gigantic overhanging walls. The mountains offer no more than their flanks and their blazing reddened crests. The Reusse thunders down its vertical bed, strewn with rocks. A fragment of some turret bears witness to former days, as if nature here accuses the forgotten centuries. Suspended in the air by walls along the granite mass, the road, a motionless torrent, runs parallel to the living torrent of the Reuss. Here and there, masonry archways provide the traveller with shelter from avalanches; then one winds for several yards through a kind of twisting funnel, and suddenly, in one of the spirals of the conch, you find yourself facing the Devil's Bridge.

The bridge today cuts through the arch of the new bridge higher up, built behind and overlooking it; the old bridge thus transformed looks like nothing more than a short aqueduct with two tiers. The new bridge, when one approaches from Switzerland, hides the descending falls. To enjoy the cascade's rainbows and spray, you must stand on the bridge; but when one has seen Niagara there are no other falls like them. My memory endlessly compares episodes from my travels, mountains with mountains, rivers with rivers, forests with forests, and my life consumes my life. The same thing happens in respect of men and society.

Modern roads, which the Simplon exemplifies and effaces, do not achieve the picturesque effects of the older roads. The latter, more natural and more daring, avoided no difficulty; they barely skirted the courses of torrents; they climbed and descended with the terrain, mounted the rocks, plunged over precipices, passed beneath snowfields, taking nothing from the delights of the imagination and the joys of danger. The old Saint-Gothard route for example was much more adventurous than the present one. Devil's Bridge merited its name, when on approaching it one saw the cascading Reuss above it, and that it traced out a gloomy arc, or rather a narrow defile through the bright spray of the falls. Then, at the end of the bridge, the road climbed vertically, to reach the chapel whose ruins are still visible. At least the inhabitants of Uri had the pious notion of building a chapel other than the cascade itself.

Then, it was not men like us who once crossed the Alps, it was the Barbarian hordes or the Roman legions. It was caravans of merchants, knights, mercenaries, campaigners, pilgrims, prelates and monks. Strange stories are told: Who built the Devil's Bridge? Who placed the Devil's Rock in the meadow at Wasen? Here and there rise turrets; crucifixes, oratories, monasteries, and hermitages, guarding the memory of an invasion, an encounter, a miracle or a misfortune. Each mountain tribe retained its own language, dress, manners, and customs. It is true that in a wilderness one lacks an excellent inn; there is no champagne to drink; no newspapers to read; but if there are a few more thieves on the Saint-Gothard, there are merely a few less rogues in society. What a wonderful thing civilization is! That pearl I leave to the *first fine jeweler*.

Suvorov and his soldiers were the last to travel this defile, at the end of which they encountered Masséna.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 14

#### The Saint-Gothard

Having emerged from Devil's Bridge and the Urnerloch tunnel, you reach the meadows of Ursern, backed by slopes like the stony terraces of an arena. The Reuss runs peacefully through the midst of the greenery; the contrast is striking: in this tranquility, society existed beyond and before revolution; men and empires slumbered two steps from the abyss into which they would fall.

At the village of L'Hospital the second ascent begins, which reaches the summit of the Saint-Gothard, filled with granite masses. These rolling masses, swollen, split, festooned to their summit with garlands of snow, resemble waves, foaming and frozen in an *ocean* of rock, on which man has left the undulations of his track.

*'At Mount Adula's feet, in a thousand reeds, below,  
The calm Rhine, proud of the progress of his flow,  
Supported by a hand on his tilted urn, sleeps  
To the soothing sound of his swelling deeps.'*

Very fine lines though inspired by the Versailles' rivers of marble. The Rhine does not emerge from a bed of reeds: he rises from a frosted bed, his urn or rather urns are of ice; his origin is cognate with that of those Northern races whose adoptive river and warrior's baldric he became. The Rhine, born from the Saint-Gothard in the Grisons, flows to the waters of the seas of Holland, Norway and England; the Rhone, also a child of Saint-Gothard, carries its tribute to Neptune to Spain, Italy and Greece: sterile snows form reservoirs for the fecundity of the ancient and the modern world.

Two lakes, on the Saint-Gothard plateau, give birth, one to the Ticino the other to the Reuss. The source of the Reuss is lower than the source of the Ticino, so that by digging a canal a few hundred feet long, you could divert the Ticino into the Reuss. If you repeated the same exercise with the principal tributaries of these waters, you would produce strange metamorphoses in the countries at the foot of the Alps. A mountain dweller can delight in damming a river, of enriching or impoverishing a country; here is something to diminish the pride of the powerful.

What a wonderful thing to see the Reuss and the Ticino exchange an eternal adieu and go their separate ways down the twin slopes of Saint-Gothard: their cradles touch; their fates are different: they go to find other lands and other suns; but their mothers, always linked, endlessly nourish their separate children from the heights of solitude.

On Saint-Gothard, there was once, a hospice run by Capuchins; there is nothing to see now but ruins: the only trace of religion is a worm-eaten wooden cross with its figure of Christ: God remains when man departs.

On the Saint-Gothard plateau, a wilderness in the sky, one world ends and another begins: German names give way to Italian ones. I am leaving behind my companion, the Reuss, which lead me onwards, as I re-ascended it from Lake Lucerne, in order to descend to Lake Lugano with my new guide the Ticino.

The Saint-Gothard is a vertical cut on the Italian side; the road which plunges into the Tremola Valley does honor to the engineer obliged to design it in the narrowest of gorges. Seen from above, the road resembles a ribbon folded and refolded upon itself; seen from below, the walls which support the causeway look like the outworks of a fortress, or imitate those dykes raised one on top of another against invasion by the waves. Sometimes too, one would liken the double line of boundary stones planted at regular intervals on both sides of the road, to a column of soldiers descending the Alps to invade unfortunate Italy once more.

Saturday, the 18th of August 1832. Lugano.

I passed through Airolo, Bellinzona and the Leventina Valley: I did not see the countryside, I only heard the torrents. In the sky, the stars rose among the domes and spires of mountains. The moon was not yet above the horizon but her light ran before her, like those *glories* with which the fourteenth century painters encircled the Virgin's head; at last she appeared, eaten into, reduced to a quarter of her disc, over the jagged summit of Furca; the points of her crescent resembled wings; one might have thought her a white dove fleeing her rocky nest: by her light, weakened and rendered more mysterious, the concave luminary revealed Lake Maggiore at the end of the Leventina Valley. I had seen the lake twice before, once when travelling to the Congress of Verona, and again when starting my Rome Embassy. Then I contemplated it in the sun, from the path of prosperity; now, I saw it at night, from the opposite shore, and the path of adversity. Between my journeys, separated by only a few years, lay no less than a fourteen-century old monarchy.

It is not that I could care less about political revolution; in giving me my freedom, they return me to my true self. I have enough sap in me still to recreate the first fruit of my dreams, enough fire to renew my relationship with the imaginary creature of my desires. The age and the world I have traversed have been no more than a double solitude to me, in which I have retained inwardly the self that heaven created. Why should I bewail the flight of days, when I have lived as much in an hour as those who have spent years trying to live?

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 15

#### A description of Lugano

Lugano is a small town with an Italian feel: porticoes like those in Bologna; people conducting their lives in the street as in Naples, Renaissance architecture; roofs jutting out from walls lacking cornices, long narrow windows, bare or decorated with capitals and pierced to the architrave. The town has its back to a vine-covered slope that overlooks two superimposed mountain plateaux, one of meadows, the other forested: the lake lies at their feet.

To the east of Lugano, on the highest summit of the mountains there is a hamlet where the women, tall and pale, have the reputation of being Circassians. There was a procession to this hamlet on the eve of my arrival; people were going on a pilgrimage to Beauty: this tribe will be some remnant of a race of Northern barbarians preserved without admixture among the population of the plain.

I have been shown various houses indicated as being suitable for me: I have found a delightful one, but the rent is too high.

In order to obtain a better view of the lake, I took a boat. One of the two boatmen spoke a Franco-Italian jargon interlarded with English. He named the mountains and the mountain villages for me: San Salvatore, from whose summit can be seen the dome of Milan cathedral; Castagnola, with its olive trees, twigs of which visitors wear in their buttonholes; San Giorgio, capped by its hermitage: each of these places has its history.

Austria, who takes all and gives nothing, holds a village at the foot of Mount Caprino annexed to the territory of Ticino. Facing it, on the other side, at the foot of San Salvatore, she still possesses a kind of promontory on which stands a chapel; but she has graciously lent this promontory to the people of Lugano to execute their criminals on, and erect their gibbets. She will someday claim this *high justice*, exercised by her permission on her territory, as proof of her suzerainty over Lugano. They no longer subject the condemned to the torment of a rope these days, they cut off their heads: Paris provided the mechanism, Vienna the theatre of torment: gifts worthy of those two great monarchies.

These images were pursuing me, when on the azure wave, to the sighs of a breeze perfumed with pine resin, the boats belonging to some confraternity passed, throwing bouquets into the lake to the sound of oboes and horns. Swallows played around my sail. Among these winged voyagers, shall I find again those I encountered one evening while wandering the ancient road from Tivoli and Horace's villa? The poet's Lydia was no longer among the swallows in the countryside around Tivoli; but I know that at that very moment another young girl was furtively carrying off a rose dropped in the abandoned garden of a villa of Raphael's century, and sought only that flower in the ruins of Rome.

The mountains which surround Lake Lugano touch bases only at water-level, resembling islands separated by narrow canals; they reminded me of the grace, form and verdant nature of the Azores archipelago. Shall I wear away my last days of exile then beneath the smiling porticos where the Princess de Belgiojoso consumed the days of her youthful exile? Shall I finish my *Memoirs* at the threshold of that historic and classical land where Virgil and Tasso sang, where so many revolutions have been accomplished? Shall I recall my Breton fortunes in sight of the Ausonian Mountains? If their curtain



were to rise, the plains of Lombardy would be revealed; beyond that Rome; beyond that, Naples, Sicily, Greece, Syria, Egypt and Carthage: distant shores I have measured, I who do not even possess the earth I press beneath the soles of my feet! And yet to die here, to end here: is that not what I wish for, what I seek? I do not know.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 16

The mountains – Trips around Lucerne – Clara Wendel - Peasant prayers

*Lucerne, the 20th-22nd of August 1832.*

I left Lugano without sleeping there; I re-crossed the Saint-Gothard, I saw once more what I had seen: I found nothing to add to my sketch. At Altdorf, everything had altered in twenty-four hours: the storm was no more, and there was no apparition in my lonely room. I have just spent the night at the inn in Fluelen, having twice covered a route whose extremities touch the two lakes and are held by two nations tied by the same political knot, and separated by every other relationship. I crossed Lake Lucerne, which has lost to my eyes a portion of its merit: it is to Lake Lugano what the ruins of Rome are to those of Athens, the fields of Sicily to the gardens of Armida.

Anyway, I have tried in vain to achieve the alpine exaltation of writers on mountain scenery, I am wasting my time.

As for the physical effects, that pure and balsamic air which should revive my powers, rarefy my blood, clear my weary brain, and give me an insatiable hunger and dreamless sleep, produces none of them. I breathe no more freely, my blood circulates no faster, and my head is no lighter under Alpine skies than in Paris. I have as good an appetite on the Champs Élysées as at Montenvers, I sleep as well in the Rue Saint-Dominique as on Mount Saint-Gothard, and if I have dreams on the delightful plain of Montrouge, they are such as sleep needs.

As for morality, I climb the rocks in vain, my spirit is no more elevated, my soul no purer: I bring the cares of the earth and the burden of human turpitude with me. The tranquility of the marmot's sub-lunar region does not communicate itself to my wakened senses. Wretch that I am, through the mists that flow beneath my feet, I always see the surface of the earth appear. A thousand heights scaled in space do not alter my view of the heavens one iota; God is no less great to me in the depths of the valley than on the summit of the mountain. If it is only necessary to look down from the clouds to become a healthy man, a saint, or a superior genius, why do so few invalids, miscreants and imbeciles go to the trouble of climbing the Simplon? They must be committed to their infirmities indeed.

A country is created only by the sun; it is light which makes a landscape. A Carthaginian beach, a tract of the Sorrento coast, a belt of dry reeds in the Roman Campagne lit by the flames of the rising or setting sun are more magnificent than all the Alps on this side of Gaul. So much for these holes called valleys, where you can see nothing at midday; these tall anchored screens called mountains; these torrents which bellow like the cattle on their banks; these purple faces, goitred necks, dropsical bellies!

If the mountains of this region justify their admirers' praise, it is only when they are enveloped in night whose chaos they increase: their angles, ledges, projections, their mighty sweep, their immense shadowy ranges, add to the effect of moonlight. The starlight engraves and carves them, in the sky, into pyramids, cones, obelisks, alabaster architecture, now throwing a gauzy veil over them and merging them in endless shadows, lightly washed with blue; now sculpting them individually, and separating them, with major refinements of line. Each valley, each lake-filled corner, with its rocks, and forests, becomes a temple of silence and solitude. In winter, the mountains present a likeness to the polar zones; in autumn, beneath a

rainy sky, with their different tints of shadow, they resemble lithographs, grey, black, and yellowy-brown: storms too suit them, as do the vapors, half fog-half-cloud which roll at their feet or hang from their flanks.

But are mountains not favorable places for meditation, freedom, poetry? Do not the profound and beautiful solitudes of the sea receive something from the soul, and add to its pleasures? Is not a sublime nature rendered more susceptible to passion, and is not passion better equipped to comprehend sublime nature? Is not an intimate love increased by a vague love of all the beauties of intellect and the senses which surround it, just as similar constituents attract and merge with one another? Does not our feeling for the infinite, penetrating our narrower feelings as we experience an immense spectacle, increase, and extend to the boundary where eternal life begins?

I know all that; but listen carefully: those are not the existing mountains that you believe you once saw; they are the mountains whose lines passion, talent, and the Muse have traced, coloring their skies, snows, peaks, iridescent waterfalls, *misted* atmosphere, soft and fleeting shadows: the landscape is that of [Claude Lorraine](#)'s palette not that of the [Campo-Vaccino](#). Let me be in love, and you will see that an isolated apple-tree, blown by the wind, bent crooked among the wheat-fields of [La Beauce](#); a sagittaria flower in a marsh; a little stream of water over a road; a moss, a fern, a maidenhair frond on the flank of a rock; with a mild damp sky; a blue-tit in a presbytery garden; a swallow flying low, on a rainy day, beneath a thatched barn or along the length of a cloister; even a bat instead of the swallow, round a rural steeple, its translucent wings flickering in the last glimmer of twilight; all those little things, attached to memories, will be enchanted by the mysteries of my happy days or the sadness of my regrets. In essence, it is the days of our youth, and people, who alone make places beautiful. The ice in [Baffin Bay](#) may appear delightful with a companion after one's heart, the banks of the Ohio or the Ganges miserable in the absence of all affection. The [poet](#) once wrote:

*'The homeland is a place where the heart is enchained.'*

It is the same with beauty.

Here is more than enough about mountains; I love them as great solitudes: I love them as a frame, a border and backcloth to a fine picture; I love them as a rampart and refuge for liberty; I love them as adding something of the infinite to the soul's passions: fairly and reasonably, that is all the good one can say of them. If I am not to locate myself beyond the Alps, my journey to Saint-Gothard will remain a fact without connections, an isolated scenic view among the paintings in my *Memoirs*: I have extinguished the lamp, and Lugano returns to the darkness.

Scarcely had I arrived at Lucerne when I hurried off again to the Cathedral or *Hofkirche*, built on the site of a chapel dedicated to St Nicholas, patron saint of bargemen: that primitive chapel also served as a lighthouse, since during the night it was seen shedding light in supernatural fashion. It was Irish missionaries who preached the Gospel in the almost empty country round Lucerne; they brought to it the liberty which their unfortunate country lacks. As I returned to the Cathedral, I saw a man digging a grave; in the church, a service was being held around a coffin, and a young woman was blessing a child's bonnet at an altar; she placed it, with a visible expression of joy, in a basket which she carried on her arm, to be entrusted with her treasure. Next day, I found the grave in the cemetery had been filled in, a beaker of holy water set on the freshly-turned soil, and fennel-seed scattered for the little birds: they were already

solitaries, around yesterday's dead. I made several trips round Lucerne through magnificent pine forest. The bees, whose hives sheltered by the overhanging roofs are placed above the farm doors, live alongside the farmers. I have seen the famous Clara Wendel, going to Mass behind her fellow prisoners, in a prison uniform. She is quite commonplace; I found her appearance like that of all those French creatures present at so many murders, but no more notable for that than wild beasts, despite those who would dress them in a 'theory' of crime, and show admiration for their throat-slitting. A plain huntsman, armed with a rifle, led the convicts to their day's work and returned them to their prison.

This evening I pursued my walk along the Reuss as far as a chapel built by the roadside: one enters by a little Italian portico. From this portico I saw a priest praying alone on his knees in the interior of the oratory, while on the heights of the mountains I watched the last rays of the setting sun. On the way back to Lucerne, I heard women in their wooden cabins telling their rosaries; children's voices responded to their maternal prayers. I stopped: I listened, through the tracery of vines, to those words addressed to God from the depths of a thatched cottage. The young, elegant and pretty girl who waits on me at the *Golden Eagle* also says her *Angelus* quite regularly when closing the shutters of the casement windows in my room. On my return I give her a few flowers I have collected; she blushes and says to me, touching her hand gently to her breast: '*For me?*' I reply: '*For you.*' Our conversation ends there.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 17

Monsieur Alexandre Dumas – Madame de Colbert – A letter from Monsieur de Béranger

*Lucerne, the 26th of August 1832.*

Madame de Chateaubriand has not yet arrived: I am going to take a trip to Constance. Monsieur Dumas is here; I met him before at David d'Angers' house, when he was having himself sculpted by the great man. Madame de Colbert, with her daughter Madame de Brancas was also passing through Lucerne (both are no longer with us. *Note*: Paris, 1836.) It was at Madame de Colbert's house, in Beauce, fifteen years ago, that I wrote the story of my childhood at Combours for these Memoirs. Places seem to travel with me, as mobile, as fleeting as my life.

The post brought me a very fine letter from Monsieur de Béranger, in response to the one I wrote to him on leaving Paris: the letter has already been published, with a letter of Monsieur Carrel's, in The Congress of Verona.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 18

Zurich – Constance – Madame Récamier

*Geneva, September 1832.*

In travelling from Lucerne to Constance, you pass through Zurich and Winterthur. Nothing pleased me in Zurich except memories of Lavater and Gessner, the trees on an esplanade that overlooks the lake, the course of the Limath, an old crow and an old elm-tree; I prefer that to all the past history of Zurich, not even taking pleasure in the Battle of Zurich. Napoleon and his generals, with victory after victory, led the Russians to Paris.

Winterthur is a new industrial town, or rather a long tidy street. Constance looks as though it belongs to no one; it is open to everyone. I arrived on the 27th of August, without seeing a customs man or a soldier, and without anyone asking for my passport.

Madame Récamier arrived two days ago, on a visit to the Queen of Holland. I was waiting for Madame de Chateaubriand, who was due to join me at Lucerne. I proposed to discover whether it would be preferable to stay in Swabia first, before descending into Italy.

In the dilapidated town of Constance, our inn was very pleasant; they were preparing for a wedding. The day after I arrived, Madame Récamier wanted to join in our hosts' joy: we embarked on the lake, and crossing the stretch of water from which the Rhine emerges to form a river, we touched at the shores of a park.

Having set foot on land, we crossed a belt of willows, on the other side of which we found a sandy path winding among clusters of shrubs, clumps of trees, and grassy carpets. A summer-house rose in the middle of the gardens, and an elegant *villa* pressed against the forest. I noticed autumn crocuses in the grass, which always make me melancholy with the reminiscences of my many and varied autumns. We walked about at random then sat on a bench beside the water. From the summer-house among the fields drifted the music of harp and horn which died away just as, surprised and delighted, we had begun to listen: it was a scene from a fairy-tale. The harmonies did not recommence, I read Madame Récamier my description of Saint-Gothard; she begged me to write something in her diary already half-filled with details of the death of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Beneath these last words of the author of *Héloïse*: *'Open the window, dear wife, so I may see the sun again'* I traced these words in pencil: *What I wished for on Lake Lucerne, I found on Lake Constance, beauty's charm and intelligence. I do not wish to die like Rousseau; I wish to see the sun for a long while still, if I am allowed to end my life beside you. Let my days expire at your feet, like these waves whose murmur you love.* – 28th of August, 1832.

The azure lake flickered through the foliage; on the southern horizon were piled the Alpine summits of the Grisons; a breeze rose and fell among the willows in harmony with the ebb and flow of the waves: we saw no one; we no longer knew where we were.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 19

Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu

On returning to Constance, we saw Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu and her son Louis-Napoléon; they had come to see Madame Récamier. I never knew the Queen of Holland under the Empire; I knew she had shown herself to be generous after my resignation on the death of the Duc d'Enghien, and when I tried to save my cousin Armand; under the Restoration, as Ambassador to Rome, I held only polite relations with Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu; unable to visit her myself, I allowed the secretaries and attachés to pay her court freely, and I invited Cardinal Fesch to a diplomatic dinner for the Cardinals. After the final fall of the Restoration, chance led me to exchange several letters with Queen Hortense and Prince Louis. These letters are a singular monument indeed to vanished glory; here they are:

MADAME DE SAINT-LEU

HAVING READ MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUBRIAND'S LAST LETTER

*'Arenenberg, this 15th of October 1831.*

*Monsieur de Chateaubriand possesses too much genius not to comprehend the extent of the Emperor Napoleon's. But his brilliant imagination requires more than admiration: memories of youth, and unfortunate illustriousness, have seduced his heart; he has sacrificed his person and his talent to them, and, like the poet who lends himself to every feeling which animates him, he does what he loves of those features which inflame his enthusiasm. Ingratitude has not discouraged him, since misfortune was always there summoning him; however his spirit, his reason, his feelings all truly French make him despite himself the protagonist of his party. Of former times he only loves the honor which makes for loyalty, the religion which makes for wisdom, his country's glory which gives him strength, the freedom of conscience and opinion which gives men's faculties a noble breadth, the aristocracy of merit which opens careers to all intelligent men, and there is his domain, more than any other. He is then a Liberal, a Napoleonist and even a Republican rather than a Royalist. Also the new France, his new images, know how to appreciate him, while he will never be understood by those he has placed as near-divinities in his heart; and if he is only to sing of misfortune, even if it is more interesting, noble misfortune has become so common in our century, that his brilliant imagination, without an object or true motive, will be extinguished for lack of a fuel elevated enough to inspire his fine talent.*

HORTENSE'

AFTER READING A NOTE SIGNED HORTENSE

*'Monsieur de Chateaubriand is extremely flattered and cannot sufficiently acknowledge the kind sentiments expressed in the first part of the note; in the second is concealed a woman's and a queen's seductiveness which might have influenced a self-esteem less disillusioned than that of Monsieur de Chateaubriand.*

*It is certainly possible today to find an opportunity for disloyalty among so many such noble misfortunes; but at the age Monsieur de Chateaubriand has attained, his homage disdains reverses of*

*only a few years duration: perhaps he should remain attached to his old misfortune, tempted though he might be by younger adversities.*

CHATEAUBRIAND.

*Paris, this 6th of November 1831.'*

*'Arenenberg, the 4th of May 1832.*

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I have just read your last pamphlet. How happy the Bourbons are to have a genius such as you to support them! You take up a cause with the same weapons that have been used to destroy it; you find words which stir every French heart. The whole of our nation finds an echo in your soul; thus when you speak of the great man who represented France for twenty years, the nobility of your subject inspires you, your genius embraces it in its entirety, and then your soul, naturally expansive, surrounds the greatest glory with the greatest thoughts.*

*I too, Monsieur le Vicomte, am enthusiastic for all that does my country honor; that is why, giving way to an impulse, I dare to express the sympathy I feel for one who displays so much patriotism and so much love of freedom. But allow me to say to you that you are the only redoubtable defender of the former royalty; you would make it the national choice if one could believe that it thought as you do; thus, to do the matter justice, it is not enough to declare you of its party, but also to prove that it is of yours.*

*However, Monsieur le Vicomte, though we differ in our opinions, at least we agree in the wishes we express for France's good fortune.*

*Accept, I beg you, etc., etc.*

LOUIS-NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE.'

*'Paris, the 19th of May 1832.*

*Monsieur le Comte,*

*One is always ill at ease in responding to praise; when he who gives it with as much spirit as propriety is moreover of a social position to which are attached peerless memories, the embarrassment is redoubled. At least, Sir, we meet in a mutual sympathy; you wish in your youth, as I do in my old age, for France's honor. Neither of us can fail to die of embarrassment or laughter, on seeing the Centre Ground incarcerated in Ancona by the Pope's soldiers. Ah, Sir, where is your uncle? To anyone other than you I would say: Where is the teacher of kings, the master of Europe?*

*In defending the cause of the Legitimacy, I am under no illusions; but I think every man esteemed by the public should remain loyal to his oaths: Lord Falkland, a friend of liberty and enemy of the Court, went to his death at Newbury as a member of Charles I's army. You will live, Monsieur le Comte, to see your country free and happy; you will traverse the ruins among which I shall rest, since I am myself a portion of those ruins.*



*I was flattered momentarily with the hope of paying my respectful homage this summer at the feet of Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu: fate, accustomed to foil my plans, has deceived me on this occasion also. I would have been happy to thank you in person for your obliging letter; we might have spoken of great glory, and the future of France, two things, Monsieur le Comte, close to your heart.*

*Chateaubriand'*

Did the Bourbons ever write letters like those I have just reproduced? Did they ever consider I might be more than a versifier or a political columnist?

When, as a small boy, I wandered a companion of goatherds on the heaths of Combours, would I have believed that the day would come when I would pace between two of the greatest powers on earth, defeated powers, giving one arm to the race of Saint-Louis, the other to that of Napoleon; opposing greatnesses leaning equally, in the misfortune in which they join, on a feeble but loyal man, formerly hated by the usurper and scorned by the Legitimacy.

Madame Récamier went to stay at Wolfberg, a château inhabited by Madame Parquin, in the neighborhood of Arenenberg, the residence of the Duchesse de Saint-Leu; I remained at Constance for two days. I saw everything one can see there: the market-hall or public loft that they have baptized the *Council Chamber*, the so-called statue of Huss, the caricature paintings, the place where they say Jerome of Prague and John Huss were burned at the stake; in short, all the usual abominations of history and society.

The Rhine, on leaving the lake, announces itself in kingly fashion; yet it has failed to protect Constance, which, if I am not mistaken, was sacked by Attila, besieged by the Hungarians and the Swedes and twice taken by the French: everywhere a river leaves a lake there is a town.

Constance is the Saint-Germain of Germany; the old members of the old society have retired there. When I knocked on a door, enquiring for an apartment for Madame de Chateaubriand, I met some canoness, an elderly daughter; some prince of ancient race, an elector in his old age and on half-pay; all this in keeping with the town's abandoned bell-towers and deserted convents. Condé's army fought gloriously beneath the walls of Constance, and seems to have established its military hospital in the town. I had the misfortune to meet a veteran *émigré*; he did me the honor of having known me previously; he had more years than hair; his words had no endings; he could not hold back the years or let them go.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 20

#### Arenenberg – Return to Geneva

On the 29th of August I went to dine at Arenenberg.

Arenenberg is situated on a kind of promontory, in a range of steep hills. The Queen of Holland, whom the sword made and the sword un-made, built the château, or, if one prefers, chalet of Arenenberg. It enjoys an extensive, but melancholy, prospect. The view overlooks the lower Lake of Constance, which is merely an expansion of the Rhine over flooded meadows. On the far side of the lake you can see sombre woods, remnants of the Black Forest, and a few white birds fluttering beneath a grey sky, buffeted by an icy wind. There, having been seated on a throne, Queen Hortense came to perch on a rock; below is an island in the lake where, they say, the tomb of Charles the Fat was discovered, and where canaries, set free and vainly seeking the sun of the Canaries, are now dying. Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu was better off in Rome: she has not yet descended relative to her birth and early years; on the contrary she has climbed; her abasement is only in relation to an accident of fate; it was not one of those falls like that of Madame la Dauphine, fallen from the height of the centuries.

Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu's companions were her son, Madame Salvage, and Madame Parquin. The guests were Madame Recamier, Monsieur Vieillard and I. Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu handled her difficult position as queen and young Beauharnais lady very well.

After dinner, she sat down at her piano with Monsieur Cottureau, a tall and handsome young painter with a moustache, a straw hat, a smock, and a shirt open at the neck, a bizarre costume something between one of Henry III's 'darlings' and a Calabrian shepherd, without affectation, but with that unfortunate manner of the studio somewhere between informal, droll, original, and affected. He hunted, he painted, he sang, he loved, he laughed, was witty, and noisy.

Prince Louis lived in a separate chalet, where I saw weapons, and topographic and military maps; hobbies which made one think, as if at random, of the conqueror's race without naming him: Prince Louis is an educated young man, full of honor and serious by nature.

Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Leu read me several fragments of her memoirs; she showed me an office filled with Bonaparte's spoils. I asked myself why this room left me cold; why the little hat which made the bourgeois of Paris happy, that belt, that uniform worn in such and such a battle found me so indifferent; I was no more moved than I am by the sight of generals' uniforms hanging in the second-hand clothes shops on the Rue de Bac; I was much more disturbed recounting Napoleon's death on St. Helena. The reason is that Napoleon was our contemporary; we all saw and knew him: the man in our memory works against the hero too close still to his glory. In two thousand years it will be another thing. The very form and content of those relics detracts from their effect: we view with respectful curiosity the Macedonian's breastplate whose ornamentation traces a plan of Alexandria, but what can we do with a worn-out morning-coat? I would prefer the Corsican mountaineer's jacket that Napoleon had to wear as a child: without us realizing it, artistic feeling exercises a great sway over our ideas.

That Madame de Saint-Leu is enthusiastic about this trivia is not surprising; but other visitors need to remember the royal mantles torn by Napoleonic claws. The centuries alone give Alexander's sweat its amber perfume. Let us wait: for a conqueror, only his sword need be shown.

Bonaparte's family cannot persuade themselves that they are nobodies. The Bonapartes lack a pedigree; the Bourbons a man: there would be more chance of a Restoration of the latter, since a man might suddenly arise but no one can create a pedigree. Everything ended for Napoleon's family with the man himself: they can only inherit his fame. The dynasty of Saint Louis was so strengthened by its long history that in falling it tore up a part of the foundations of society with its roots.

I am unable to say why the Imperial world seems to me void of manners, physiognomy, style, and customs; yet is of a different age to the world of the Legitimacy: the latter possesses the decrepitude that time brings; it is blind and deaf, it is weak, ugly and querulous, but it displays its natural air and its crutches suit its age. Imperialists, on the contrary, give a false show of youth; they wish to appear sprightly, but occupy the Invalides; they are not ancient like the Legitimists, they are only old like a spent fashion: they have the look of those divinities of the Opera who have descended to their chariots of gilded cardboard; military suppliers bankrupted by a poor speculation or a battle lost; ruined gamblers who still retain some remains of their borrowed magnificence, bracelets, chains, seals, rings, faded velvet, tired satins, and seamless Point d'Angleterre lace.

Returning to Wolfberg with Madame Récamier, I left for the night: the weather was dark and rainy; the wind sighed in the trees and the owls hooted: a truly Germanic scene.

Madame de Chateaubriand soon arrived in Lucerne: the dampness of the villa worried her, and, Lugano being too dear, we decided on Geneva. We made our way via Sempach; the lake holds a memory of a battle that assured Swiss liberation at a time when the nations this side of the Alps had lost their freedom. Beyond Sempach, we passed the Abbey of Saint-Urbain, dilapidated like all the monuments of Christianity. It is situated in a gloomy place, at the edge of a heath leading to woodland: if I had been alone and free, I would have asked the monks for some hole in their walls, to finish my *Memoirs*, like an owl; then I might have gone to end my days beneath the lovely relaxing sun of Naples or Palermo: but beautiful countries and the spring have become injurious to me, disastrous, sources of regret.

When we arrived in Bern, we were told that there was a major revolt going on in the city; I looked carefully, the streets were deserted, silence reigned, the terrible revolution had been completed without a word, to the peaceful smoking of pipes, in the depths of some little inn.

Madame Récamier lost no time in joining us in Geneva.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 21

#### Coppet –Madame de Staël's tomb

Geneva, October 1832.

I have started to set to work seriously once more; I write in the mornings and walk in the evenings. Yesterday I visited Coppet. The château was closed; they opened the doors for me; I wandered through the empty rooms. My companion on this pilgrimage recognized all the places where she still imagined she saw her friend, sitting at the piano, flitting in and out, chatting on the terrace which borders the gallery; Madame Récamier saw the room she had occupied once more; lost days appeared before her: it was almost a repetition of the scene I depicted in René: *'I traversed the sonorous apartments where only the sound of my steps was heard... Everywhere the rooms were untended, and spiders spun their webs over the abandoned couches... How sweet but how fleeting are the moments brothers and sisters spend together in their youth, gathered beneath the wings of their aged parents! The family of man endures but a day; a breath from God disperses it like smoke. The son has scarcely come to know the father, the father his son, the brother his sister, the sister her brother! The oak tree sees its fruit germinate around it, it is not thus with the children of men!'*

I recall too what I said in my *Memoirs* concerning my last visit to Combours, on leaving for America. We occupy two diverse worlds, but bound by a secret empathy, Madame Récamier and I. Alas! These isolated worlds: each of us bears them within us; for who are those who have lived so long together they do not possess different memories? From the château we entered the park; autumn was in its first blush and a few leaves had fallen; the wind abated by degrees and allowed the sound of a mill-stream to be heard. Following the paths she used to trace with Madame de Stael, Madame Récamier wished to salute her grave. Some distance from the park is a copse of very tall varied trees, surrounded by a damp and broken wall. This copse resembles those clumps of woodland in the midst of plains that hunters call *coverts*; into them death drives its prey and surrounds its victims.

A tomb had been built in these woods to receive the remains of Monsieur and Madame Necker, and Madame de Staël; when the latter had been placed in the crypt, the door had been sealed. Auguste de Staël's son lies outside it, and Auguste himself, dying shortly before his child, was placed beneath a stone at his parent's feet. On the stone are engraved these words from Scripture: *'Why seek ye the living among the dead?'* I did not enter the woods; Madame Récamier alone had obtained permission to penetrate there. I remained seated on a bench before the surrounding wall, I turned my back on France and my gaze was fixed, now on the summit of Mont Blanc, now on Lake Geneva: golden clouds covered the horizon behind the sombre line of the Jura; one might have likened it to a *glory* rising over a long coffin. I could see Lord Byron's house on the far side of the lake, its rooftop lit by a ray of the setting sun; Rousseau was no longer there to admire the spectacle, while Voltaire, also gone, never cared for it. It was at the foot of Madame de Stael's tomb that so many of the illustrious dead, absent from this very shore, presented themselves to my memory: they seemed to come seeking their peer to fly to heaven with her, forming her cortege through the night. At that moment, Madame Récamier, pale and in tears, emerged from the funereal grove, almost like a shade herself. If I have ever felt at once the vanity and the reality of life and glory, it was at the entrance to those woods, silent, dark, anonymous, where she who possessed so much brilliance and fame slept, and in seeing what it is to be truly loved.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 22

#### A walk

This very evening, on the day following my devotions to the dead at Coppet, weary of the lake shore, I went, with Madame, dreamier as ever, to seek the less frequented walks. We discovered a narrow gorge, downstream along the Rhône, where the river seethed beneath a series of water-mills, between rocky cliffs bordering meadows. One of those meadows extends to the foot of a hill on which a house is situated, among a grove of trees.

While talking, we several times ascended and descended that narrow verge of grass, separating the noisy river from the silent bank: how many people are there one can weary with what one has been, and lead back along the track of one's days? We spoke of those times, always painful and always regretted, when passion is the joy and martyrdom of youth. Now I write this page at midnight, while all is at rest around me, and through my window I can see a scattering of stars shining above the Alps.

Madame Récamier is to leave us, she will return in the spring, and I will spend the winter evoking my vanished hours forcing them to appear before the tribunal of my reason. I do not know whether I am sufficiently impartial or whether the judge will show too much indulgence to the guilty. I will spend the summer in Jean-Jacques' country. God does not wish me to conquer my dreamer's malady! And then, when autumn returns, we will go to Italy: *Italian*! It is my eternal refrain.

BOOK XXXV

CHAPTER 23

A letter to Prince Louis-Napoleon

Prince Louis-Napoleon having given me his pamphlet entitled *Rêveries politiques*, I addressed this letter to him:

*‘Geneva, October 1832.*

*Prince,*

*I have read with care the little pamphlet you have been good enough to entrust to me. I have put in writing, as you wished, a few thoughts which arose naturally from yours, which I have already submitted to your judgement. You know, Prince, that my young king is in Scotland, that as long as he is alive there can be no other king for me in France than he; but if God, in his impenetrable wisdom, has rejected the line of Saint-Louis, if the habits of our country were to allow the possibility of a Republican state within her borders, there is no name which better befits the glory of France than your own.*

*I am etc., etc.*

CHATEAUBRIAND’

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 24

A circular to the editors-in-chief of the newspapers – Letters to the Minister of Justice, the President of the Council, and Madame la Duchesse de Berry – I write my *Memoir* on the Princess' captivity

Paris, Rue d'Enfer, January 1833

I often dreamt of that impending future I had created for myself and which I believed I would achieve. At the fall of day, I would wander the windings of the Arve, beneath the flanks of the Salève. One evening, I met Monsieur Berryer; he was returning from Lausanne and told me of the arrest of Madame la Duchesse de Berry; he knew no details. My plans for repose were yet again overturned. When Henri V's mother thought she had achieved success, she gave me leave of absence; her misfortune tore up that previous document, and summoned me to her defence. I immediately left Geneva having written to the Ministers. Reaching the Rue d'Enfer, I addressed the following circular to the editors-in-chief of the newspapers:

'Sir,

*Having arrived in Paris on the 17th of this month (November 1832), I wrote on the 18th to the Minister of Justice to ask if the letter which I had the honor to have sent him from Geneva, on the 12th, on behalf of Madame la Duchesse de Berry, had reached him and if he would have the goodness to send it on to Madame.*

*I sought from the Keeper of the Seals, at the same time, the necessary authorization to visit the Princess at Blaye.*

*The Keeper of the Seals kindly replied to me, on the 19th, that he had sent my letters to the President of the Council and that it was he whom I must address. I therefore wrote on the 20th to the Minister of War. Today, the 22nd, I received his reply of the 21st: he regrets the necessity of having to inform me that the government has not judged itself able to accede to my requests. That decision has put an end to my approaches to the authorities.*

*I have never had the pretension, Sir, to believe myself capable in isolation of defending the cause of the unfortunate in France. My plan, if I had been granted permission to reach the feet of the august prisoner, would have been to suggest to her on this occasion the formation of a council of more brilliant men than I. Beyond the honorable and distinguished names already offered, I would have taken the liberty of indicating for Madame's endorsement, Monsieur le Marquis de Pastoret, Monsieur Lainé, Monsieur Villèle etc.*

*Now, Sir, having been repulsed by officialdom, I fall back upon my rights as a private citizen. My Memoirs of the life and death of Monsieur le Duc de Berry, wrapped in the hair of the widow who is today a captive, rest beside the heart which Louvel rendered more like that of Henri IV. I have not forgotten that signal honor, for which the present moment demands I account, and which makes me feel the whole weight of my responsibility.*

*I am, Sir, etc., etc.*

CHATEAUBRIAND'

While I was writing this circular for the newspapers, I found the means to send this letter to Madame la Duchesse de Berry:

*‘Paris, this 23rd of November 1832.*

*Madame,*

*I had the honor to send you a previous letter, addressed from Geneva, and dated the 12th of this month. That letter, in which I begged you to do me the honor of selecting me as one of your defenders, has been printed in the newspapers.*

*Your Royal Highness’ cause may be taken up individually by all those who, without being so authorized, have useful truths to impart; but if Madame desires someone to work in her own name, it is not one man, but a group of political and legal minds that must be charged with that great matter. In that case, I ask Madame to add to myself (and whomever she has already chosen) Monsieur le Comte de Pastoret, Monsieur Hyde de Neuville, Monsieur de Villèle, Monsieur Lainé, Monsieur Royer-Collard, Monsieur Pardessus, Monsieur Mandaroux-Vertamy, and Monsieur de Vaufreland.*

*I also consider Madame that one could summon to such a council several men of significant talent with opinions contrary to ours; but perhaps that would be to place them in false position, and oblige them to sacrifice honor and principle, which elevated minds and honest consciences will not agree to do.*

*CHATEAUBRIAND’*

Being an old soldier, used to discipline, I therefore hastened to join the ranks and march to my officers’ orders: driven by the wishes of the powerful to dueling, I accepted the challenge. I barely paused, in coming from the husband’s grave, before fighting in front of the widow’s prison.

Even supposing I was isolated, and had misunderstood what was appropriate for France, I was nevertheless on the path of honor. Now, it is valuable to mankind for a man to sacrifice himself for his conscience; it is fine for him to consent to destroy himself in order to remain true to principles of which he is convinced and which appertain to whatever is noble in our nature: such men deceived are the necessary opponents of brute fact, victims charged with pronouncing a *veto* on behalf of the oppressed against the triumph of force. Men praise the Poles; is their devotion anything other than sacrifice? They can achieve nothing; they could never have achieved anything; in my adversary’s’ minds, is such loyalty worthless to the human race?

I prefer, they say, one family to my own country: no, I prefer faithfulness to oath-breaking, the moral world to material society; that is all; as to that family, I dedicate myself to it in the sole belief that it has been of vital assistance to France; I associate its prosperity with that of the country, and when I deplore the misfortunes of one, I deplore the disasters that strike the other: vanquished, I pursue my duty, while the conquerors pursue their interests. I am endeavoring to retire from the world with my self-esteem intact; in solitude, one must be careful whom one chooses for company.



## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 25

Extract from my *Memoir on the Captivity of Madame la Duchesse de Berry*

Paris, Rue d'Enfer

In France, the land of vanity, as soon as an opportunity presents itself to make a noise, a crowd of people seize on it: some make a stir from kindness of heart, others because of the belief they have in their own merit. I therefore had plenty of competition; like me, they appealed to Madame la Duchesse de Berry, for the honor of defending her. At least my presumption in offering myself as the Princess' champion was somewhat justified by my previous services: if I could not throw Brennus' sword onto the scale, I could place my name there: unimportant as it is, it had once won some small victories for the monarchy. I opened my *Memoir on the Captivity of the Duchesse de Berry* with a series of thoughts with which I was greatly taken; I have often reproduced them, and I shall likely do so again.

*'One never ceases to be astonished,' I said, 'at the course of events, one always imagines one has reached the end; but always the revolution recommences. Those who have spent forty years marching in order to arrive at their goal can only groan; they thought they might be able to rest for a few hours on the edge of the tomb: a vain hope! Time prods those panting voyagers and forces them onwards. Suddenly, while they are journeying, the old monarchy falls at their feet! Barely escaping from the successive collapses, they are obliged to traverse anew the dust and rubble. What century will see an end to it?*

*Providence wished the passing generations, destined to these unmemorable days, to be of little account, so the damage would be of little account. Do we not see too how all fails, how all comes to naught, how no one can be themselves or embrace their destiny completely, how no event delivers what it contains or ought to deliver. Will the superior men of this age who die, extinguished, have successors? The ruins of Palmyra vanish in the sands.'*

Passing from this general observation to specifics, I show, in my argument, that one might act in an arbitrary manner towards Madam la Duchesse de Berry by considering her a prisoner of the police, of war, or of State, or in demanding a bill of *attainder* from the Chambers; that one might submit her to the judgement of the law by applying Briqueville's law of exception to her, or the code of common law; or that one might regard her person as sacred and inviolable.

The Ministers maintained the first opinion, the men of July the second, the Royalists the third.

I ran through these various suppositions: I proved that if Madame la Duchesse de Berry had entered France, she had only been enticed there by listening to opinions that demanded a different Present, and called for a different Future.

Disloyal to its popular origins, the revolution emerging from the July Days repudiated glory and courted shame. Other than in those hearts worthy of giving it shelter, liberty, which became an object of derision among those who made liberty their rallying cry, liberty which those jugglers dismissed with a blow of the foot, liberty bruised then strangled when the tourniquet of the laws of exception had been applied, will transform the revolution of 1830, by its annihilation, into a cynical deception.

Given that, and in order to deliver us, Madame la Duchesse de Berry arrived. Fate betrayed her; Deutz sold her, Thiers bought her. If there was no wish to take police measures against her it only remained to bring her before the assize court. I supposed this to be so, and brought the Princess' defence counsel on stage; then having made the speech for the defence, I addressed myself to the prosecution:

*'Prosecuting Counsel, arise:*

*'You will establish, my learned friend, that Caroline-Ferdinande of Sicily, Berry's widow, niece of the late Marie-Antoinette of Austria, Capet's widow, is guilty of complaint against a man renowned as the uncle and tutor of an orphan named Henri; the said uncle and tutor being, according to the calumnies of the accused, a usurper of the crown of his pupil, which pupil impudently claims to have been king since the abdication of the former Charles X and of the ex-Dauphin, until the election of the King of the French.*

*In support of your case, let the judges first call Louis-Phillippe as a witness for the prosecution or the defence, if he prefers not to give an opinion as a relative. Then let the judges confront the descendant of the arch-traitor with the accused; let the Iscariot into whom Satan entered, intravit Satanas in Judam, speak of the money he received for the sale, etc., etc.*

*Then, according to the evidence as to place, show that the accused was for six hours in a fiery Gehenna in too narrow a space, where four persons could barely breathe who spoke in a manner injurious to the victim saying they would torment her like Saint Lawrence. Now, that Caroline-Ferdinande, being pressed by these accomplices against the fire-back, her clothes must twice have caught fire, and at each blow the police dealt the burning hearth from outside, the commotion would have been felt in the accused person's heart and would have made her vomit drops of blood.*

*Then, in the presence of Christ's image, the burnt robe shall be deposited on the desk as evidence: since in these Judas markets there is always a robe cast to fate.'*

Madame la Duchesse de Berry has been set at liberty by an arbitrary act of power, now they consider her to have been dishonored. The picture I painted of the proceedings made Philippe conscious of the odium of a public trial, and made him decide on an act of mercy towards one he had thought to torment: the pagans, in the reign of Severus, threw a recently freed young Christian girl to the wild beasts. My pamphlet, of which only a few paragraphs now remain, achieved a historically important result.

I am still moved when copying the speech which terminates my effort; it is, I agree, a foolish waste of tears.

*'Illustrious captive of Blaye, Madame, may your historic presence on a soil which has known much heroism lead France to repeat to you what my political independence has earned me the right to say to you: Madame, your son is my king! If Providence still grants me a few moments, shall I see your triumphs, after having had the honor to embrace your adversity? Shall I receive that reward for my faith? At the hour of your happy return, I would go joyfully to end in retirement the days I began in exile. Alas! I am sorry to be unable to do anything for your present fate! My words prove useless against the walls of your prison: the sound of the wind, waves and men, at the foot of your solitary fortress, will not even allow these last accents of a faithful voice to rise to you.'*

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 26

#### My trial

Paris, March 1833.

Various newspapers, having repeated the phrase: *Madame, your son is my king*, were brought before the courts for Press offences; I found myself involved in the legal proceedings. This time I could not deny the competence of the judges; I had to try and save, by my presence, the men attacked on my behalf; it was a matter of honor that I must answer to my works.

Moreover, on the eve of my summons to the tribunal, the *Moniteur* published the Duchesse de Berry's declaration of her secret marriage; if I had been absent, they would have thought the Royalist party had retreated, that it had abandoned misfortune and blushed for the Princess whose heroism it had celebrated.

There was no lack of timid counsellors who told me: '*Do not go. You will be embarrassed no end by your phrase: Madame, your son is my king.*' –

*I will shout it the more loudly,*' I replied. I entered the very room where the Revolutionary Tribunal had once been installed which Marie-Antoinette had appeared before, and where my brother had been condemned. The July Revolution had removed the crucifix whose presence, while consoling the innocent, had made the judge tremble.

My appearance before the judges had a happy result, it offset for a moment the announcement in the *Moniteur*, and kept Henri V's mother on the heights where her courageous attempt had placed her; doubt set in when people saw that the Royalist party dared to brave the outcome and did not consider itself defeated.

I did not wish for a lawyer, but Monsieur Ledru, who was attached to me during my detention, wished to speak: he became confused and upset me so much Monsieur Berryer, who was pleading on behalf of the Quotidienne, indirectly took up my defence. In the summing up, I called the jury the *universal peerage* which contributed not a little to our complete acquittal.

Nothing remarkable distinguished this trial in the dreadful room that had echoed to the voices of Fouquier-Tinville and Danton; there was only the amusement of Monsieur Persil's arguments; wishing to prove my culpability, he cited this phrase from my pamphlet: *It is difficult to crush what crawls beneath one's feet*, and cried out: 'Gentlemen, feel the scorn which emanates from that phrase, *it is difficult to crush what crawls beneath one's feet?*' and he made a movement like a man who crushes something underfoot. He continued, triumphantly: the laughter of the audience continued also. This fine gentleman saw neither the audience's delight in the unfortunate phrase, nor how perfectly ridiculous he appeared stamping in his black robe as if he were dancing, his face pale with inspiration and his eyes wild with eloquence.

When the jury returned and pronounced the verdict of *not guilty*, applause broke out, I was surrounded by a throng of young men who had donned lawyer's robes to gain entry: Monsieur Carrel was there.

The crowd grew on my emergence: there was a scuffle in the courtyard of the palace between my escort and the police. I finally reached home, with great difficulty, in the midst of the crowd which followed my cab, shouting: '*Long Live, Chateaubriand!*'

At another time this acquittal would have been very significant; to declare that it was not a crime to say to the Duchesse de Berry: *Madame, your son is my king* was to condemn the July Revolution; but today that decision signifies nothing, because there is no conviction or durability in anything. In twenty-four hours all changes; I would be condemned tomorrow on the evidence with which I have been acquitted today.

I went to leave my card at the jurors' houses and notably that of Monsieur Chevet, one of the members of the *universal peerage*.

It was easier for an honest citizen in all conscience to make a decision in my favor than it was to find the money in my pocket to add to the happiness of my acquittal the pleasure of providing my judge with a good dinner: Monsieur Chevet had pronounced more fairly on the *Legitimacy*, the *Usurpation*, and the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme* than most of the publicists and censors.

## BOOK XXXV

### CHAPTER 27

#### Popularity

Paris, April 1833.

My *Memoir on the Captivity of Madame la Duchesse de Berry* made me extremely popular with the Royalist party. Deputations and letters arrived from all sides. From the north and south of France I received petitions covered with thousands of signatures. They all demanded in referring to my pamphlet that Madame la Duchesse de Berry should be set at liberty. Five hundred young Parisians came to compliment me, not without a great commotion among the police: I received a ruby-red goblet with this inscription: *To Chateaubriand from the loyal citizens of the Villeneuveois (Lot-et-Garonne)*. A town in the Midi sent me some very good wine to charge the goblet with, but I do not drink. Finally, Legitimist France took for its motto the words: ‘*MADAME, YOUR SON IS MY KING!*’ and several journalists adopted it as their epigraph; it was engraved on pendants and rings. I was the first to have confronted the Usurpation with a truth that no one dared say, and strangely I believed in the return of Henri V less than the most miserable Centrist or the most violent Republican.

Moreover I do not understand the word Usurper in the narrow sense that the Royalist party gives to it; there may be much to say in regard to this word, as there is in regard to the word Legitimacy: but in reality there is usurpation and a worse sort of usurpation, that of a tutor who robs his pupil and proscribes an orphan. All the grand phrases about ‘*the need to save the country*’ are pretexts which furnish ambition with an immoral politics. No one, in truth, should regard the cowardice of your usurpation as an example of your virtue! Are you, by any chance, Brutus sacrificing his sons to Roman greatness?

I can compare, in my own life, literary fame with popularity; the first pleased me for a few hours, but that love of fame soon passes. As for popularity, it found me indifferent, since during the Revolution I saw far too many men surrounded by the masses who having raised them on a shield dropped them in the gutter. A democrat by nature, an aristocrat by habit, I would willingly abandon my fortune and my life for the people, so long as I had little to do with the crowd. However, I was extremely touched by the action of the young people of July in carrying me in triumph to the Chamber of Peers; it was not that they carried me aloft as their leader or because I thought as they did; they were merely rendering justice to an enemy; they recognized in me a man of liberty and honor; and that generosity of spirit moved me. But the other kind of popularity which I happened to acquire among my own party caused me no emotion; between the Royalists and I there is a degree of coolness: we desire the same king; apart from that, most of our wishes are contrary.

**End of Book XXXV**

BOOK XXXVI  
CHAPTER 1  
The Marie-Thérèse Infirmary

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, the 9th of May 1833*

I have brought the sequence of preceding events up to date: am I at free to resume my work? That work consists of the various parts of these *Memoirs* as yet incomplete. I shall have some difficulty in continuing *ex abrupto* (impromptu), since my mind is preoccupied with the things of the moment; I am not in a suitable state to retrieve my past from the repose in which it lies, agitated though it was when it was actually in being. I have picked up my pen to write; of what and with regard to what? I am not sure.

Casting a glance over the journal in which, for six months, I have kept an account of what I have done and what has happened to me, I see that most of the pages are headed to Rue d'Enfer.

The house I live in near the city gate may be worth sixty thousand francs; but at a time of rising land prices, I bought it for much more, and have never been able to pay off the debt: there is the matter of preserving the *Infirmierie de Marie-Thérèse* founded through the efforts of Madame de Chateaubriand and adjacent to the property; a group of entrepreneurs proposed opening a café and building a *roller-coaster* on the said property, the noise hardly according with the sound of death-throes.

Am I unhappy with my sacrifices? Of course, one is always happy to aid the unfortunate; I willingly shared the little I possessed with the needy; but I am not sure my benevolent disposition amounts to a virtue at home. I am virtuous as a condemned man is who gives away what will not be his for more than an hour. In London, the victim they are going to hang sells his skin for drink; I do not sell mine, I give it to the gravediggers.

My house once bought, I have done my best to live in it; I have made it such as it is. From the drawing-room windows one's first view is of what the English call a *pleasure-ground*, a proscenium formed by a lawn and banks of shrubs. Beyond this enclosure, over a retaining wall topped by white lattice fencing, is a field variously cultivated and dedicated to providing fodder for the Infirmary's cattle. Beyond this field is another piece of ground separated from the field by another retaining wall, with a green trellis interwoven with clematis and Bengal roses; that end of my estate consists of a clump of trees, a little meadow and a poplar alley. The corner is extremely secluded: it does not smile at me as Horace's corner did: *angulus ridet*. Quite the contrary, I have often wept there. The proverb says: *Youth must pass*. Late autumn also has several extravagances to pass through:

*'Tears and pity,  
A kind of love, possessing its charms.'*

(La Fontaine)

My trees are of various kinds. I have planted twenty-three cedars of Lebanon and two druid oaks: they mock their master with his slender longevity, *brevem dominum*. An avenue, a double alley of chestnut-trees, leads from the upper to the lower garden: along the intermediate field the ground slopes steeply.

I have not selected these trees as I did at the Vallée-aux-Loups in memory of places I have visited. He who delights in memories preserves his hopes, but when one lacks children, youth, and homeland what attachment can one have to trees whose leaves, flowers and fruits are no longer mysterious symbols used to count the days of illusion? In vain they say to me: ‘*You look younger*’, do they think I could confuse wisdom teeth with milk teeth though? The former were given me to eat bitter bread under the monarchy of the 7th of August. Moreover my trees scarcely know if they serve as a calendar for my pleasures or as death certificates for my years; they grow each day, as I shrink: they marry themselves to those of the Foundlings enclosure and the Boulevard d’Enfer which envelop me. I see not one house; I would be less divorced from the world six hundred miles from Paris. I hear the bleating of the goats that nourish the abandoned orphans. Oh! If only I had been as they are in the arms of Saint Vincent de Paul! Born of frailty, obscure and unknown as them, I would now be some nameless workman, having nothing to discuss with mankind, not knowing why or how I came into this life, or how and why I am to leave it.

The demolition of a wall has put me in communication with the *Marie-Thérèse Infirmary*; I find I am simultaneously part of a monastery, a farm, an orchard and a park. In the morning I wake to the sound of the *Angelus*; I hear in my bed the chanting of the priests in the chapel; from my window I can see a Calvary which rises between a walnut and an elder tree: cows, chickens, pigeons, and bee-hives; the sisters of charity in their robes of dark muslin and their white cotton caps, convalescent women, and aged ecclesiastics wander among the garden’s lilacs, azaleas, calycanthuses and rhododendrons, among the rose-bushes, redcurrants, raspberries and kitchen-garden vegetables. Some of my octogenarian priests were exiles when I was: after having shared my misery with them on the lawns of Kensington, I offer them the grassy tracts of my hospice; they drag their religious age behind them like the folds of the sanctuary veil.

For companion I have a fat tabby cat, red with black transverse stripes, born in the Vatican in Raphael’s Loggia: Leo XII carried it in a section of his robe, where I spied it, enviously, when the Pontiff gave me my audiences as an Ambassador. St Peter’s successor dying, I inherited the cat without a master, as I have recounted in speaking of my Rome embassy. He is called *Micetto*, and nicknamed *the Pope’s cat*. He enjoys on that account excessive attention from pious souls. I seek to make him forget his exile, the Sistine Chapel and the sunlight of that cupola of Michelangelo’s over which he would prowl, far from the ground.

My house and the various *Infirmary* buildings with their chapel and Gothic sacristy have the air of a colony or a hamlet. On ceremonial days, religion, hidden away in my house, and the old monarchy hidden away in my hospital, set to marching. Processions, composed of all our invalids, preceded by the young girls of the neighborhood, pass by with the Holy Sacrament, cross and banner, singing, beneath the trees. Madame de Chateaubriand follows them rosary in hand, proud of the participants, the object of her concern. The blackbirds flute, the warblers twitter, and the nightingales compete with the hymns. I think back to the Rogations whose rural pomp I have described: from the theory of Christianity, I passed to the practice.

My home faces west. In the evening, the crowns of trees, lit from behind, engrave their dark silhouetted indentations on the golden horizon. My youth returns at that hour; it revives those lost days which time has reduced to the insubstantiality of phantoms. When the constellations pierce the blue vault, I remember the splendors of the firmament I admired from the depths of the American forests, or the surface of the

Ocean. Night is more favorable than day for a traveler's reminiscences; she hides the landscape from him that reminds him of the place where he lives; she only allows him to see the stars, similar in aspect at different latitudes of the same hemisphere. Then he recognizes the stars he saw in such and such a country, at such and such a time; the thoughts he had, the feelings he experienced in various parts of the earth rise again, fixed to the same point in the heavens.

In the Infirmary, we only have news of the world outside at two public charity collections and to some extent on Sundays: on those days our hospice is turned into a kind of parish. The Sister Superior claims that the fine ladies come to Mass in hopes of seeing me; an industrious treasurer, she turns their curiosity into contributions: by promising to display me to them, she lures them into the dispensary; once caught in her net, they yield their money to her, willingly or unwillingly, for sugar-pills. She has me selling chocolate made here, to the profit of the invalids, as La Martinière once involved me in the flow of redcurrant syrup in which he drank to the success of his love affairs. The saintly piper also removes the used quills from Madame de Chateaubriand's inkwell: she trades them amongst the Royalists of noble race, claiming that these precious quills wrote *the superb Memoir on the Captivity of Madame la Duchesse de Berry*.

Various fine paintings of the Spanish and Italian Schools, a Virgin by Guérin, and a St Theresa, the last masterpiece of the painter of Corinne, display our attachment to the arts. As for history, we soon saw the Marquis de Favras' sister and Madame Roland's daughter enter our hospice: monarchy and republic entrusted us with expiating their ingratitude and nurturing their invalids.

All are welcome at the *Marie-Thérèse*. The poor women who are obliged to leave when they have recovered their health lodge close to the *Infirmary*, priding themselves on falling ill again and re-entering it. Nothing proclaims it a hospital; Jews, Protestants, or Catholics, French people or foreigners receive a tactful charity's care disguised as an act of affection: each patient thinks to have found a tender mother. I have seen a Spanish girl, as beautiful as Dorothea, the pearl of Seville, dying at sixteen of consumption, in the common dormitory, congratulating herself on her good fortune, gazing smilingly, with great black half-extinguished eyes, at a pale slim figure, that of Madame la Dauphine, asking her for news and assuring her that she would soon be well. She died that very evening, far from the mosques of Cordoba and the banks of the Guadalquivir, her native river: 'Where are you from? – Spain. – Spain, and here!' (Lope de Vega)

A large number of widows of Knights of Saint-Louis are regular guests; they bring with them all that remains to them, portraits of their husbands in the uniforms of Infantry Captains: a white coat, the lining red or sky-blue, hair extravagantly curled 'à l'oiseau royal'. The portraits are hung in the attic. I cannot view that '*regiment*' without smiling; if the former monarchy had survived, I would have added one to the number of such portraits, in some neglected corridor I would have proved a consolation to my great-nephews: '*It's your great-uncle François, Captain in the Navarre Regiment: he was full of spirit! He had a riddle printed in the Mercure which began with the words: 'Take off my head' and an ephemeral piece in the Almanach des Muses: 'The Cry from the Heart.'*

When I am weary of my garden, the plain of Montrouge replaces it. I have seen the plain alter: what have I not seen alter! Twenty-five years ago it was when travelling to Méréville, to Marais, to the Vallée-aux-Loups, I passed through the Barrière du Maine; to right and left of the road one saw only windmills, the wheels of lifting gear in the quarry pits, and the nursery created by Monsieur Cels, a former friend



of Rousseau. Desnoyers built his salons of a hundred covers for the soldiers of the Imperial Guard who came to clink glasses in the intervals between successful battles, between the subjugation of kingdoms. Various small restaurants with music and dancing rose around the mills, from the Barrière de Maine to the Barrière du Montparnasse. Higher up was the Moulin Janséniste and Lauzun's little house by way of contrast.

Near the restaurants false acacias were planted, the indigent's shade as soda-water is the poor man's champagne. A fairground site attracted the nomadic population of the dance-floors; a village emerged with paved streets, cabaret artists and gendarmes, Amphions and Cecrops of the police.

As the living became established here, the dead claimed their place. Not without opposition from the drinkers, a cemetery was enclosed on ground containing a ruined mill, like a hunting tower: it is there the dead each day bring the grain they have garnered; a simple wall separates the dance, the music, the nocturnal din, the noise of the moment, and the marriages of an hour, from the silence without term, the night without end and the eternal wedding.

I often go to the cemetery which is younger than I, where the maggots that feed on the dead are still alive; I read the epitaphs: let women from sixteen to twenty become death's prey! Happy to have lived only when young! The Duchesse de Gèvres, last drop of the blood of Du Guesclin, skeleton from another age, takes her rest among the plebeian sleepers.

In this new exile, I already have old friends: Monsieur Lemoine lies here. Secretary to Monsieur de Montmorin, he was bequeathed to me by Madame de Beaumont. Every evening, when I was in Paris, he used to bring me his art of simple conversation, something which pleases me so much when united to goodness of heart and steadiness of character. My sick and weary spirit relaxes alongside a healthy and restful mind. I have left the remains of Monsieur Lemoine's noble patroness by the banks of the Tiber.

My walks are shared between the cemetery and the boulevards that surround the Infirmary: I no longer dream there: having no future, I no longer have dreams. A stranger to the new generations, I seem to them like a powdered mendicant, quite naked; I am barely clothed now by these scraps of days, cut short by gnawing time as the herald at arms trims the tunic of an inglorious knight: I am happy to live apart. It pleases me to live a stone's throw from the city gate, beside a highroad and always ready to depart. From the foot of the milestone, I watch the courier pass, a likeness of myself and of life: *tanquam nuntius percurrrens: like a messenger hurrying by*.

When I was in Rome, in 1828, I conceived the idea of constructing a greenhouse and a garden house at the bottom of my hermitage in Paris; all from the proceeds of my embassy and the fragments from antiquity found in my excavations at Torre Vergata. Monsieur de Polignac arrived in the Ministry; I sacrificed a place that delighted me to my country's freedom; fallen into poverty again, goodbye my greenhouse: *fortuna vitrea est: fate is made of glass*.

The wretched habit of employing paper and ink makes it impossible to stop scribbling. I took up my pen not knowing what I should write, and I have produced this description, too long by at least a third: if I had time, I would abridge it.

I must ask pardon of my friends for the bitterness of some of my thoughts. I only know how to smile with the lips; I have spleen, a physical melancholy, a true illness; whoever reads these *Memoirs* has seen what

my fate has been. I'd barely set sail from my mother's womb and already torments assailed me. I have voyaged from shipwreck to shipwreck; I feel a curse lies on my life, a weight too heavy for this cabin of reeds. May those I love then not think badly of me; may they forgive me, and allow my fever to ebb: between these fits, my heart is all theirs.

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 2

#### A Letter to Madame la Duchesse de Berry

I was here amongst these disjointed pages, thrown pell-mell about my table, and blown away by the wind that my windows allowed to enter, when I was brought the following letter and note from Madame la Duchesse de Berry; let us enter once more into the second part of my dual life, the positive part.

*‘From the Citadel of Blaye, 7th of May 1833.*

*I am painfully thwarted by the refusal of the government to allow you to visit me despite having twice requested it of them. Of all the vexations without number that I am forced to experience, this is without doubt the most painful. I have so many things to say to you! So much advice to ask of you! Since I must forgo seeing you, I will at least try, using the only means left me, to tell you of the errand I wish to send you on and which you will accomplish: for I count, without reservation, on your attachment to me and your devotion to my son. I therefore charge you especially, Sir, with going to Prague and telling my relatives that if I refused to make known my secret marriage until the 22nd of February, I thought to benefit my son’s cause and show that a mother, a Bourbon, was not afraid to risk her life. I counted on revealing my marriage only on my son’s majority; but government threats, and mental torture, pushed to the furthest degree, forced me to make my declaration. In the state of ignorance I am in regarding the date at which I might be freed, after so many false hopes, it is time to give my family and the whole of Europe an explanation which might prevent injurious suppositions. I would have desired to be able to give it earlier; but an imprisonment which is absolute and the insurmountable difficulties of communicating with the outside world have prevented me until now. You will say to my family that I was married in Italy to Comte Hector Lucchese-Palli, of the Princes of Campo-Formo.*

*I ask you, O Monsieur de Chateaubriand, to bear to my children all my expression of tenderness for them. Be sure to tell Henri that I count, more than ever, on his efforts to become day by day worthy of the admiration and love of the French people. Tell Louise how happy I would be to embrace her and that her letters have been my sole consolation. Lay my homage at the King’s feet and offer my tender friendship to my brother-in law and my good sister-in-law. I beg them to communicate their future intentions to you. I ask you to report my family’s wishes to me wherever I may be. Enclosed by the walls of Blaye, I find consolation in having such a spokesman as Monsieur de Chateaubriand; he can, at all times, count upon my attachment.*

MARIE-CAROLINE.

#### NOTE.

*I have experienced great satisfaction at the harmony that reigns between you and Monsieur le Marquis de Latour-Maubourg, placing great value on it with regard to my son’s interests.*

*You may communicate the letter I have written you to Madame la Dauphine. Assure my sister-in-law that as soon as I am set at liberty I will waste no time in sending her all the papers relative to my political affairs. All my wishes would be to go to Prague as soon as I am free; but the sufferings of all kinds that I have experienced have so destroyed my health that I will be obliged to stay in Italy for some*

*time to recover a little and avoid frightening my poor children too much with how altered I am. Study my son's character, his qualities, his inclinations, his faults even; tell the King, Madame la Dauphine and myself what needs correcting, changing, perfecting, and make known to France what she may expect from her young King.*

*Through my various contacts with the Emperor of Russia, I know he has strongly welcomed repeated suggestions of marrying my son to Princess Olga. Monsieur de Choulot will give you more precise information regarding the people you will meet in Prague.*

*Wishing to remain French above everything, I ask you to obtain permission from the King for me to keep my title as a French Princess and my name. The mother of the King of Sardinia is always known as the Princesse de Carignan despite having married Monsieur de Montléar, to whom she gave the title of Prince. Marie-Louise, Duchess of Parma, has kept her title of Empress in marrying Count von Neipperg, and she has remained the tutor of her sons: her other children are also named Neipperg.*

*I beg you to leave for Prague as soon as possible, desiring more fervently than I can say that you may arrive in time for my family to learn all the details from you alone.*

*I would appreciate more than anything that no one may know of your departure or at least that no one may know you are carrying a letter from me, in order that my sole means of correspondence, which is so precious to me however infrequent, may not be discovered. Count Lucchesi, my husband, is descended from one of the four greatest and most ancient families of Sicily, the only remaining offshoots of the twelve companions of Tancred. His family has always been outstanding for the noblest devotion to the cause of royalty. The Prince of Campo-Franco, Lucchesi's father, was First Gentleman of the Chamber to my father. The present King of Naples, having complete confidence in him, has placed him with his young brother the Viceroy of Sicily. I do not speak to you of their sentiments; they conform to ours at all points.*

*Convinced that the only way of being understood by the French is to speak to them only of honor and lead them to dreams of glory, I have thought of marking the beginning of my son's reign by bringing Belgium and France closer. Count Lucchesi has been charged by me with making initial overtures on this subject to the King of Holland and the Prince of Orange; he has contributed powerfully to making them feel welcome. I have not been fortunate enough as to complete this treaty, the object of all my wishes; but I still think it has a chance of success; before leaving the Vendée, I gave Marshal de Bourmont the authority to continue the negotiations. No one is more capable than he is of concluding them successfully, because of the esteem he enjoys in Holland.*

*Blaye, this 7th of May 1833.*

*M.-C.*

*Because I am uncertain of being able to write to the Marquis de Latour-Maubourg, try and see him before you leave. You may tell him all that you judge appropriate, but in the most absolute secrecy. Agree with him as to the management of the Press.'*

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 3

#### Reflections and Resolutions

I was moved on reading these documents. A daughter of so many kings, this woman fallen from such a height, after having shut her ears to my advice, had the courage in her nobility to address me, and pardon me for having predicted the failure of her enterprise: her faith in me went to my very heart and honored me. Madame de Berry had not judged ill; the very nature of that enterprise which had lost her everything had not estranged me. To play for a throne, glory, the future, destiny is no common thing: the world knows a Princess may prove a heroic mother. But that they should indulge in an abuse without example in history, that is a shameful torment inflicted on a feeble woman, alone, deprived of aid, overwhelmed by all the forces of government raised against her, it is as if they were trying to overcome some mighty power. Her own parents handing over their daughter to the ridicule of lackeys, holding her by all four limbs in order that she might give birth in public, calling on the local officials, gaolers, spies, and passers-by to watch the child emerge from their prisoner's womb, just as France had been called on to watch the birth of her king! And which prisoner: a descendant of Henri IV! And which mother: the mother of an exiled orphan whose throne they occupied! Could one find in a penal colony a family so base born that they would dream of branding a child of theirs with such ignominy? Would it not have been nobler to murder Madame la Duchesse de Berry than make her submit to such tyrannical humiliation? Whatever leniency was shown in that cowardly business is owing to our century: whatever infamy was shown is owing to the government.

Madame la Duchesse de Berry's letter and note are remarkable not merely for where they were written: the section concerning the re-union of Belgium and Henri V's marriage show a mind capable of serious matters; the section concerning her family in Prague is touching. The Princess fears she will be obliged to remain in Italy *to recover a little and avoid frightening her children by the change in her*. What could be sadder or more melancholy! She adds: *'I ask you, O Monsieur Chateaubriand (!) to bear to my children all my tenderness for them, etc.'*

O Madame la Duchesse de Berry! What can I do for you, I, a feeble creature already half-destroyed? But how can I refuse such words as these: *'Enclosed by the walls of Blaye, I find consolation in having such a spokesman as Monsieur de Chateaubriand; he can, at all times, count upon my attachment.'*

Yes: I will leave on the last and most glorious of my embassies; I will go on behalf of the prisoner of Blaye to seek the prisoner of the Temple; I will negotiate a new family pact, bear a captive mother's affection to her exiled children, and hand over the letters in which courage and misfortune shall present my accreditation to innocence and virtue.

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 4

My journal Paris to Prague from the 14th to the 24th of May 1833 – Departure from Paris –  
Monsieur de Talleyrand's carriage - Basel

A letter for Madame la Dauphine and a note for the two children were included in the letter addressed to me.

A *coupé* remained to me from my past grandeurs in which I once shone at the Court of George IV, and a travelling calash formerly constructed for the Prince de Talleyrand. I had the latter re-furbished, in order to make it fit for unusual journeying: since, by origin and custom it was hardly prepared for chasing after fallen kings. On the 14th of May, the anniversary of Henri IV's assassination, at eight thirty in the evening, I left to seek Henri V, orphan and exile.

I was not without some concerns regarding my passport; obtained from the Foreign Office, it lacked a personal description, and was eleven months old; issued for Switzerland and Italy it had already allowed me to leave and re-enter France; various *visas* attested to these different occasions. I did not wish to have it renewed or to request a replacement. The police would have been alerted, all the telegraph stations would have been put in play, and my carriage, trunk and person would have been searched at every customs post. If my papers had been seized, imagine the pretexts for harassment, house search, and arrest! Perhaps even an extension to the Princess' term of imprisonment, for it was not yet known that she had a secret means of correspondence with the outside world! It was therefore impossible for me to ask for a passport and thereby signal my departure; I trusted in my stars.

Avoiding the Frankfurt route which was too well policed, and that of Strasbourg which followed the line of telegraph stations, I took the road to Basel with Hyacinth Pilorge my secretary, who was wedded to my fortunes, and Baptiste, *valet de chambre*, when I was *Monseigneur*, and now plain *valet* again on the fall of His Lordship: we ascend and descend together. My cook, the famous Montmirel, resigned on my departure from government, declaring to me that he would not start up *in business* again except for me. He had wisely decided, after being introduced to the nature of ambassadors during the Restoration, that a defunct ambassador should return to *private life*; Baptiste had returned to domesticity.

Arriving at Altkirch, the frontier post, a gendarme approached and asked for my passport. On seeing my name, he told me that he had been a captain in the Dragoon Guards, under command of my nephew Christian during the Spanish campaign of 1823. Between Altkirch and Saint-Louis I met a priest with his parishioners; they were holding a procession to ward off cockchafers, unpleasant insects that swarm during the days of July. At Saint-Louis, the customs officials, who knew me, allowed me to pass. I happily arrived at the gates of Basel, where the old drum-major awaited me who had inflicted on me *un bedit garandaine d'in quart d'hire: a little quarantine for a quarter of an hour* the preceding August; but there was no question of cholera and I went to lodge at *The Three Kings* on the banks of the Rhine; it was ten in the morning on the 17th of May.

The hotel manager procured me a local servant called Schwartz, a native of Basel, to serve as my interpreter in Bohemia. He spoke German, as my good Joseph, the Milanese ironmonger, spoke Greek in Messenia when inquiring after the ruins of Sparta.

On the same day, the 17th of May, at six in the evening, I left port. Climbing into the calash, I was astounded to see the Altkirch gendarme in the midst of the crowd; I was not sure if he had been dispatched to follow me: but he had simply been escorting the French mail-sacks. I gave him a toast to his former captain.

A student approached me and threw me a note with this inscription: ‘*To the 19th Century Virgil*’; on it was written this amended passage from the Aeneid: *Macte animo, generose puer: bless your courage, noble child*. Then the coachman whipped up the horses, and I departed proud indeed of my great fame in Basel, astonished indeed to be cast as Virgil, and delighted indeed to be called *child, generose puer*.

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 5

#### The banks of the Rhine – The Rhine Falls – Moskirch – A storm

I crossed the bridge, leaving the peasants and the bourgeois of Basel at war in the midst of their republic, fulfilling in their own manner the role they were called upon to play in the general transformation of society. I ascended the right bank of the Rhine and gazed with a certain amount of sadness at the high hills of the Canton of Basel. The exile I had come to seek in the Alps the year before seemed to me a pleasant way to end my life, a sweeter fate than this business of empire on which I was re-engaged. Did I nourish the slightest hope for Madame la Duchesse de Berry or her little boy? No: moreover I was convinced that, despite my recent service, I would find no friends in Prague. Those who had sworn oaths to Louis-Philippe, and who praised the fatal decrees regardless, were more agreeable to Charles than I who had never perjured myself. It is far too much for royalty for one to have been right twice running: royalty prefers flattering treason to cool devotion. So I was off to Prague as the Sicilian soldier, hung at Paris in the time of the League, went to the gallows: the Neopolitans' confessor sought to put courage in his belly and cheered him on the way with: '*Allegramente! Allegramente! Merrily! Merrily!* So my thoughts wandered while the horses carried me onwards; but when I thought of the misfortunes of Henri V's mother, I reproached myself for my regrets.

The banks of the Rhine fleeing behind my carriage provided a pleasant distraction for me: when one sees a country from a window, though one may be dreaming of other things, a reflection of the image before the eyes still enters the thoughts. We bowled along through the meadows painted with May flowers; there was fresh green on the orchards, woods, and hedges. Horses, donkeys, cows, sheep, pigs, cats and dogs, chickens and pigeons, geese and turkeys roamed the fields along with their masters. The Rhine, a warrior's river, seemed happy in the midst of this pastoral scene, like an old soldier dropping in to visit his neighbors.

On the next day, the 18th of May, before arriving at Schaffhausen, I was guided to the Rhine Falls; I stole a few moments from the fall of kings to consider its symbolism. It would have been better for me to have ended my days in the castle which overlooks the chasm. Since I had set Atala's not-yet-realized dream at Niagara, since at Tivoli I had met with another dream already vanished from the earth, who knows whether I might not have found, in the tower by the Rhine Falls, a more lovely vision still, wandering its banks long ago, which might have consoled me for all the shades I have lost!

From Schaffhausen I continued my route towards Ulm. The countryside displays cultivated basins into which wooded hillocks, separated one from another, plunge their feet. In the woods which were being harvested at that time, there were oaks to be seen, some felled, others standing; the former lying on the ground stripped, their trunks and branches white and naked like the skeletons of some strange creature; the latter bearing the fresh verdure of spring on hairy boughs garnished with black moss: they united, in a way never seen among human beings, the dual beauty of age and youth.

In the fir plantations of the plain, clearings had left empty spaces; the land had been converted to meadows. These grassy racecourses amidst the slate-grey woods have something both smiling and serious about them, and are reminiscent of the New World savannahs. Yet the huts still have a Swiss character; the hamlets and the inns are distinguished by that delightful neatness unknown in our country.



Halting for dinner, between six and seven in the evening at Moskirch, I mused at the window of my inn: cattle were drinking at a fountain, and a heifer leapt and frolicked like a deer. Everywhere where animals are treated well, they are happy and fond of man. In Germany and England they do not strike horses, they do not abuse them; the creatures accustom themselves to being harnessed; they move and halt at the least utterance, the slightest twitch of the reins. The French are the most inhuman of nations: have you seen our coachmen hitching up their horses? They drive them to the shafts by kicking them in the flanks with their boots, and with blows from their whip-handles to the head, bruising their mouths with the bit to drag them backwards, accompanying the display with curses, shouts and insults aimed at the poor animal. All in all, they force the beasts to bear burdens which exceed their strength, and slash their hides by lashing them with the whip to make them go; a Gallic ferocity has remained with us: it is merely hidden by our silk stockings and cravats.

I was not the only one gaping; the women were doing as much at the windows of their houses. I am often asked as I pass through unknown hamlets: ‘*Would you like to live here?*’ I always reply: ‘*Why not?*’ Who, during the madcap days of his youth has not said with the troubadour Pierre Vidal:

*‘Don n’ai mais d’un pauc cordo  
Que na Raymbauda me do,  
Quel reys Richartz ab Peitieus  
Ni ab Tors ni ab Angieus.*

*Richer am I with a ribbon though  
Given me by the sweet Raimbaude  
Than King Richard with Poitiers  
Or with Tours, or with Angers.’*

Subjects for poetry exist everywhere; pleasure and pain exist in every place; had not those women of Moskirch gazing at the sky or at my carriage, gazing at me or gazing at nothing, joys and sorrows, affairs of the heart, fortune, or family, just as they have in Paris? I would have been far away in the depths of my neighbors’ histories, if dinner had not been announced poetically to the sound of a thunderclap: it was a lot of noise for such a small matter.

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 6

#### The Danube – Ulm

19th of May, 1833.

At ten in the evening, I clambered into my vehicle; I slept to the patter of rain on the hood of my calash. The sound of my coachman's little horn woke me. I heard the murmuring of a river I could not see. We had arrived at the gate of a town; the gate opened; and someone enquired about my passport and my luggage. We were entering the vast empire of His Majesty the King of Württemberg. I saluted the memory of Grand-Duchess Hélène, a graceful and delicate flower now shut in the greenhouses of the Volga. There was a day when I understood the prize of high rank and fortune: it was at the reception I gave for the young Princess of Russia in the gardens of the Villa Medici that I realized how the magic of the sky, charm of place, and the prestige of beauty and power could intoxicate; I imagined myself to be at once Torquato Tasso and Alfonso d'Este; I was worth more than the prince, less than the poet; Hélène was more beautiful than Leonora. As representative of the heir of Francis I and Louis XIV, I dreamt of being King of France.

No one searched me, here: though I had nothing against the rights of sovereigns, I who recognized those of a young monarch when sovereigns themselves no longer recognized them. The vulgarity, the modernity of the customs officer and passport contrasted with the storm, the Gothic gateway, the sound of the horn and the noise of the torrent.

Instead of a lady in distress whom I was prepared to rescue, I found, on leaving the town, an old fellow who, raising a lantern in his left hand to the level of his grey head, and holding out his right hand to Schwartz sitting on the coachman's seat, opened his mouth like the jaws of a pike caught on a hook, and demanded *six kreutzers*: Baptiste, ill and wet, could not prevent himself laughing.

And this torrent I had just crossed, what was it? I asked the coachman, who shouted back: 'Donau (the Danube).' Another famous river which I had passed over without knowing it, as I lit without knowing it on the site of the oleanders of the Eurotas! What use has it been to me to drink the waters of the Mississippi, Po, Tiber, Cephisus, Hermus, Jordan, Nile, Guadalquivir, Tagus, Ebro, Rhine, Spree, Seine, and Thames and a thousand other rivers celebrated or obscure? Unknown, they have failed to grant me their peace; renowned, they have not communicated to me their glory: they can only say they have seen me pass by as their own banks watch the waves pass.

I arrived quite early, on Sunday the 19th of May, at Ulm, having traversed Moreau's and Bonaparte's theatres of war.

Hyacinthe, a member of the Legion of Honor, wore his ribbon: that decoration brought us incredible respect. Having only a little flower in my buttonhole, as is my custom, I passed, before anyone heard my name, as a mysterious being: my Mamelukes, at Cairo, wished me, whether I would or no, to be one of Napoleon's generals disguised as a scholar; they refused to give up the idea and waited hour after hour for me to noose Egypt in the belt of my caftan.

Yet it is among the nations whose villages we have burnt and whose fields we have ravaged that such sentiments exist. I enjoyed the glory; if we had done Germany nothing but good would they have missed us so? Inexplicable human nature!

The evils of war are forgotten: we have left the flame of life alive in the soil we have conquered. That inert mass once activated continues to ferment, because intellect is working there. Travelling today one notices that the people are alert, knapsacks on their backs; ready to leave, they seem to be waiting for us to head up the column. A Frenchman is always taken for an aide-de-camp bringing the order to march.

Ulm is a tidy little town with no particular character; its ruined ramparts have been converted into kitchen gardens and walks, which is what happens to all ramparts. Their fate is somewhat similar to that of military men; soldiers bear arms in their youth; invalided out, they turn into gardeners.

I went to look at the Cathedral, a Gothic vessel with an elevated spire. The side aisles are split into narrow double vaults, supported by a single row of pillars, such that the interior of the edifice smacks of both cathedral and basilica.

The pulpit has an elegant steeple for a dais, tapering at the top like a mitre; the interior of this steeple is composed of a central core around which winds a helical vault with stone filigree. Symmetrical needles piercing the exterior seemed to have been designed to bear candles; they illuminate this tiara when the Pontiff preaches on feast days. Instead of the officiating priests I saw little birds hopping about in this granite foliage; they celebrated the Word which gave them voice and wings on the fifth day of Creation.

The nave was deserted; in the apse of the church two separate groups of boys and girls were receiving instruction.

The Reformation (as I have already said) was wrong to display itself among the Catholic monuments it invaded; there it is mean and ashamed. Those high porticos demand numerous clergy, solemn pomp, hymns, paintings, ornaments, silken veils, draperies, lace, silver, gold, lamps, flowers and altar incense. Protestantism would have said indeed that it had returned to primitive Christianity, the Gothic churches reply that it has disowned its ancestors: the Christian architects of these marvels were not the children of Luther and Calvin.

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 7

Blenheim – Louis XIV – The Hercynian Forest – The Barbarians – The sources of the Danube

19th of May, 1833.

On the 19th of May, at midday, I left Ulm. At Dillingen there was a lack of horses. I waited for an hour in the main street, having for recreation a view of a stork's nest planted on a chimney as if on an Athenian minaret; a multitude of sparrows had insolently made their nests in the bed of this peaceable *queen with the long neck*. Below the stork, a lady, resident on the first floor, gazed at the passers-by with the gloom of a barely concealed envy, below the lady was a wooden saint in a niche. The saint will be hurled from his niche onto the pavement, the lady from her window into the tomb: and the stork? She will fly away: thus the three stories will end.

Between Dillingen and Donauwörth, you cross the battlefield of Blenheim. The tread of Moreau's armies over the same soil has not effaced those of Louis XIV; the Great King's defeat overshadows in this country the success of the Grand Emperor.

The coachman who drove me was from Blenheim: arriving at the top of the village he sounded his horn: perhaps he was announcing his passage to the peasant-girl he loved; she would have trembled with joy in the midst of the very fields where twenty-seven French battalions and twelve squadrons were taken prisoner, where the Navarre Regiment, whose uniform I once had the honor of wearing, buried its standards to the mournful sound of trumpets: these are the commonplaces of the succeeding centuries. In 1793 the Republic took back from the church at Blenheim the flags torn from the Monarchy in 1704: she avenged royalty and killed a king; she culled the head of Louis XVI, but would allow France alone to rip apart the white banner.

Nothing reveals Louis XIV's grandeur more than discovering a token of him in the depths of the ravines cut by the torrent of Napoleonic victories. That monarch's conquests left our country with borders that we still retain. The Brienne student, to whom the Legitimacy gave a sword, locked Europe in his ante-chamber for a moment; but she escaped: Henri IV's grandson placed that very Europe at France's feet; there she remains. That does not mean I seek to compare Napoleon to Louis XIV: men of diverse destinies, they belonged to unlike centuries, to different nations; the one perfected an era, the other created a world. One can say of Napoleon what Montaigne said of Caesar: *'I forgive Victory her inability to free herself of him.'*

The unworthy tapestries of Blenheim House, which I viewed with Peltier, represent Marshal Tallart doffing his hat to the Duke of Marlborough, who postures like Rodomont. Tallart nevertheless remained the old lion's favorite: a prisoner in London, he conquered, to Queen Anne's mind, Marlborough who had beaten him at Blenheim, and died a member of the *Académie des Sciences*: according to Saint: *'He was a man of average height with vigilant eyes, full of fire and spirit, but endlessly troubled by the demon of his ambition.'*

I wrote history in my calash: why not? Caesar certainly wrote in his litter; and if he won the battles he tells of, I did not lose those of which I speak.

From Dillingen to Donauwörth there is a rich plain with varying levels where fields of corn mingle with meadows: you approach and retreat from the Danube according to the curves of the road and the windings of the river. At this altitude the waters of the Danube are as yellow as those of the Tiber.

You have scarcely left one village before you see another; clean and welcoming; often the house walls are decorated with frescoes. A certain Italianate character becomes evident the nearer you approach Austria: the dweller by the Danube is no longer a peasant.

*'His chin to bushy beard gives welcome  
And his whole hairy person's  
The image of a bear, but badly groomed.'*

But the Italian skies are lacking here: the sun is pale and low; these market towns so thickly seeded are not the little towns of the Romagna brooding over the artistic masterpieces they hide; there you scratch the earth, and your labor produces, like a blade of wheat, some marvel from an ancient chisel.

At Donauwörth, I regretted arriving too late in the evening to enjoy the fine view of the Danube. On Monday the 20th, the countryside appeared the same; yet the soil became less fertile, and the peasants seemed poorer. Pine woods and hills appeared again. The Hercynian Forest began here; the trees of which Pliny has left us a singular description were felled by the generations now buried beside the ancient trees.

When Trajan threw a bridge across the Danube, Italy heard for the first time a name so fatal to the ancient world, that of the Goths. The path lay open to the savage multitudes who marched to sack Rome. Attila and his Huns built their wooden palaces to match the Coliseum, on the banks of this river that rivalled the Rhine, and like them was an enemy of the Tiber. Alaric's hordes crossed the Danube in 396 to overthrow the civilization of the Greek empire, at the same spot where the Russians crossed it in 1828 with the object of overthrowing the barbarian empire squatting amid the ruins of Greece. Would Trajan have imagined that a new kind of civilization would establish itself on the far side of the Alps, within the confines of the river he had almost discovered? Born in the Black Forest, the Danube flows on to vanish into the Black Sea, Where is its principal source? In the courtyard of a German Baron who employs the naiad to wash his laundry. A geographer having been ill-advised enough as to deny the fact, the gentleman proprietor started proceedings against him. Judgement was given that the source of the Danube was in the aforesaid courtyard, and was not known to be elsewhere. How many centuries it has taken to progress from Ptolemy's errors to this important truth! Tacitus has the Danube descend from Mount Abnoba, *montis Abnobaë*. But the chiefs of the Hermunduri, Cherusci, Marcomani and Quadi tribes, who are the authorities on which Roman history depends, were not as convinced as my German baron. Eudore did not know as much, when I had him voyage to the mouths of the Ister, to which the Euxine, according to Racine, would carry Mithridates in two days. *'Having crossed the Ister near its mouth, I discovered a stone tomb on which a laurel grew. I pulled away the plants which covered a row of Latin letters, and soon I was able to read this first line of the elegies of an unfortunate poet:*

*'Little book, you'll go to Rome, and go to Rome without me.'*

*(Les Martyrs.)*

The Danube, in losing its solitariness, has seen evils inseparable from society take place along its banks: plague, famine, fire, the sacking of towns, wars, and the endless divisions arising from passion or human error.

*'We've seen before, Danube, the inconstant,  
Which serves, now Catholic now Protestant,  
Both Rome and Luther with its wave,  
Yet later sets at naught the Lutheran,  
and likewise sets at naught the Roman,  
Ending at last its wandering way  
By even failing to be Christian.'*

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 8

Regensburg – Maker of Emperors – The decrease in social life the further one gets from France –  
Religious sentiment in Germany

After Donauwörth one reaches Burkheim and Neuburg. At lunch, in Ingolstadt, I was served venison: it is a great pity to eat the flesh of so delightful a creature as the deer. I have always read with horror the description of the feast at the installation of George Neville, Archbishop of York, in 1466: four hundred swans were roasted, as a choir, singing their own funeral hymn! There was also a matter of three hundred and four *porkers*: I can well believe it!

On arriving via Donauwörth, Regensburg, which we call Ratisbon, offers a pleasant aspect. Two o'clock struck, on the 20th, as I arrived at the post house. While the horses were being hitched, which always takes a long time in Germany, I entered a neighboring church called the Alte Kapelle, newly whitened and gilded. Eight old priests in black, with white hair, were singing Vespers; I once prayed in a chapel in Tivoli for a man who himself prayed at my side; in one of the cisterns at Carthage I offered vows to Saint Louis, who died not far from Utica, more of a philosopher than Cato, more sincere than Hannibal, more pious than Aeneas: in the chapel at Ratisbon, I thought of recommending to Heaven the young king I came to seek; but I feared God's wrath too greatly to solicit a crown; I begged the dispenser of all grace to grant the orphan happiness, and make him disdainful of power.

I hastened from the *Old Chapel* to the Cathedral. Smaller than that of Ulm, it is more religious in feeling and finer in style. Its stained glass shrouds it in that darkness proper to meditation. The white chapel better suited my wishes on behalf of the innocent Henri; the sombre basilica filled me with emotion for my former king, Charles.

I was unmoved by the mansion in which they once elected Emperors, which at least proves that they created elected sovereigns, even sovereigns whom they brought to justice. The eighteenth clause of Charlemagne's will reads: *'If any of our grandsons, living or yet to be born, are accused, let it be ordained that no one shave their head, blind them, cut off a limb, or condemn them to death without proper discussion and investigation.'* I forget which deposed German Emperor demanded sovereignty only of a vineyard which he was fond of.

At Ratisbon, once the maker of sovereigns, they often minted emperors of low estate; that commerce has lapsed: one of Bonaparte's battles and a princely Primate, dull sycophant of our universal policeman, were unable to resuscitate the dying city. The citizens of Regensburg dress like Parisians and as dirty have no distinguishing feature. The city, with no great number of inhabitants, is gloomy; weeds and thistles besiege its suburbs: they will soon have raised their plumes and lances above its defenses. Kepler who, as Copernicus did, made the earth revolve rests forever in Ratisbon.

We left by way of the bridge on the road to Prague, a bridge much praised and very ugly. Leaving the Danube Basin, you climb the escarpments. Kirn, the first relay station, is perched on a rough slope, at the summit of which, through rain-filled clouds, I saw dreary hills and pale valleys. The peasants are of a different appearance; the children, sallow and swollen, look ill.

From Kirn to Waldmünchen the barrenness of the countryside increases: hardly any hamlets; only pine-wood cabins, bonded with clay, as in the poorest Alpine passes.

France is the heart of Europe; the further one travels from it the more social life diminishes; you could estimate the distance you are from Paris by the greater or lesser languor of the region in which you are staying. In Spain and Italy the diminution of movement and the progress of death are less obvious: in the former country another people, another society, of Christian Arabs attends to you; in the latter the charm of the climate and the arts, the enchantment of love and ruins, prevents the weather feeling oppressive. In Austria and Prussia the military yoke weighs on your mind, as the darkened sky weighs on your head; something warns you that you cannot write, or speak, or think freely; that you must eliminate the noblest part of your being, and leave the highest human faculties idle, as a useless gift of the divinity. The arts and the beauty of nature fail to while away your hours, and it only remains for you to plunge into gross debauchery or into those speculative studies that the Germans enjoy. For a Frenchman, at least for me, that way of life is impossible; without nobility, I cannot comprehend existence, which is difficult enough to comprehend with all the seductions of liberty, glory and youth.

Yet one thing charms me about the German people, their religious sentiments. If I were not too tired, I would quit the inn at Nittenau where I am penciling this journal; I would go this evening and pray with the men, women and children whom the sound of bells summons to church. That congregation, seeing me on my knees among them, would welcome me by virtue of our mutual faith. When will the day ever come on which philosophers in their temple will bless a philosopher arriving by coach, and offer up a similar prayer, with that stranger, to a God about whom all philosophers are in disagreement? The priest's rosary is more certain: I will hold to it.



## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 9

#### Arrival at Waldmünchen – The Austrian Customs – Entry to Bohemia denied

Waldmünchen, at which I arrived on the morning of Tuesday the 21st of May, is the last village in Bavaria this side of Bohemia. I congratulated myself on being able to fulfil my mission promptly; I was no more than a hundred and fifty miles from Prague. I plunged myself into icy water, I washed at a spring, like an Ambassador preparing for a triumphal entry; I left and a few miles from Waldmünchen I approached the Austrian Customs, full of confidence. A lowered barrier closed off the road; I clamber down with Hyacinthe whose red ribbon blazes. A young customs officer, armed with a rifle, leads us to the ground floor of a house, and into a vaulted chamber. There a fat old German customs officer-in-chief sits at his desk as though at a tribunal; with red hair, red moustache, thick slanted eyebrows over two half-open greenish eyes, and a nasty look about him; a blend of Viennese police spy and Bohemian smuggler.

He takes our passports without saying a word; the young customs officer timidly brings me a chair, while his chief, before whom he trembles, examines the passports. I do not sit down and I go and look at the pistols hanging on a wall and a carbine placed in a corner of the room; it recalls the rifle which the Agha of the Isthmus of Corinth fires at the Greek peasant. After a five minute silence, the Austrian barks out a few words which my interpreter from Basle translates thus: ‘*You cannot enter.*’ What, I cannot enter, and why?

An explanation commences:

*‘Your signature is not on the passport – My passport is a Foreign Office passport. – Your passport is out of date. – It has no year on it; it is legally valid. – It has not been stamped by the Austrian Ambassador in Paris. – You are wrong, it has. – The stamp is not embossed. – A lapse on the part of the Embassy; you can see elsewhere the visas issued by other foreign legations. I have just traversed the Canton of Basle, the Grand-Duchy of Baden, the Kingdom of Württemberg, and the whole of Bavaria, without the slightest difficulty. At the simple declaration of my name, no one even opened my passport. – Are you a public person? – I have been a Minister of France, Ambassador to His Very Christian Majesty to Berlin, London and Rome. I am known personally to your sovereign and Prince von Metternich. – You cannot enter. – Do you wish me to deposit a guarantee? Do you wish to grant me an escort who will answer for me? – You cannot enter. – May I send a courier to the Government of Bohemia? – As you wish.’*

Patience failed me; I began to wish the customs officer to the devil. As ambassador of a reigning king, it would have mattered little if I had lost a few hours; but as ambassador of a Princess in chains, I considered myself disloyal to misfortune, a traitor to my captive sovereign.

The man kept writing: the interpreter from Basel had not translated my monologue, but there are a few French words that our soldiers have taught the Austrians that they have not forgotten. I said to the interpreter: ‘*Explain to him that I am going to Prague to offer my homage to the King of France.*’ The customs man, without interrupting his scribbling, replied: ‘*To Austria Charles X is not King of France.*’ I replied: ‘*He is to me.*’ These words spoken to Cerberus appeared to have some effect; he looked me up and down. I thought that the lengthy script might finally result in a satisfactory visa. He scribbled something else on Hyacinthe’s passport, and gave the lot to the interpreter. It transpired that the visa was

an explanation of the reasons why I was not allowed to continue my journey, such that not only was it impossible for me to proceed to Prague, but my passport was marked invalid for anywhere else I might present myself. I climbed back into the calash, and told the coachman: '*To Waldmünchen.*'

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 10

My stay in Waldmünchen – A letter to Count Chotek – Holy Communion

27th of May, 1833.

My return surprised the innkeeper not a whit. He spoke a little French, he told me that a similar thing had happened before; foreigners had been obliged to stop at Waldmünchen and send their passports to Munich to be stamped with a *visa* by the Austrian Legation. My host, a very fine man, who was the postmaster, undertook to transmit a letter, a copy of which follows, to the Supreme Burgrave of Bohemia.

*‘Waldmünchen, the 21st of May 1833.*

*Monsieur le Gouverneur,*

*Having the honor to be known personally to His Majesty the Emperor of Austria and Prince von Metternich, I thought I would be able to travel in the Austrian States with a passport, which having no year of expiry is still legally valid and has been stamped by the Austrian Ambassador in Paris with visas for Switzerland and Italy. Indeed, Monsieur le Comte, I have crossed Germany and my name has sufficed to allow me through. Yet this morning the head of the Austrian customs post at Haselbach did not consider himself authorized to be so obliging, for the reasons spelled out in his visa on my enclosed passport, and on that of Monsieur Pilorge, my secretary. To my great regret, he has forced me to return to Waldmünchen where I await your wishes. I dare to hope Monsieur le Comte that you will resolve the little difficulty which detains me, by sending me, via the courier whom I have the honor to send you, the necessary permit for me to travel to Prague and from there to Vienna.*

*I am with the deepest consideration, Monsieur le Gouverneur, your very humble and obedient servant.*

CHATEAUBRIAND

*Monsieur le Comte, pardon the liberty I am taking of adding an open message for Monsieur le Duc de Blacas.’*

A degree of pride is apparent in this letter: I felt hurt; I was as humiliated as Cicero when, on returning in triumph from his Governorship of Asia, his friends asked him whether he had come from Baiae or his house at Tusculum. What! My name, which had flown from Pole to Pole, had not reached the ears of a customs officer in the mountains of Haselbach, a fact rendered all the more cruel given my success in Basel! In Bavaria, I had been saluted as *Monseigneur* or Your Excellency; a Bavarian officer, in the inn at Waldmünchen, said loudly that my name required no *visa* from the Austrian Ambassador. This was a great consolation, I agree, but ultimately the sad truth remained: there existed on this earth a man who had never heard my name.

Yet who was to know whether the Haselbach customs officer actually knew of me! The police of all countries work hand in glove! A politician who neither approves nor admires the Treaties of Vienna, a Frenchman who loves only liberty and the honor of France, and who remains loyal to fallen greatness, might well be on the index in Vienna. What noble vengeance to handle Monsieur de Chateaubriand like

one of those travelling clerks so suspicious to agents! What sweet satisfaction to treat an envoy, entrusted with treacherously bearing greetings from a captive mother to her exiled child, as a vagabond whose papers are not in order!

The courier left Waldmünchen on the 21st, at eleven in the morning; I calculated that he might return by twelve-fifteen on the next day but one, the 23rd; but my imagination was working vigorously: What would become of my message? If the Governor was strong-minded and a student of life, he would send the permit; if he was a timid man lacking in spirit he would reply that my request was not within his jurisdiction, and that he was obliged to refer it to Vienna. This little incident might both please and displease Prince von Metternich at one and the same time. I knew how he feared the Press; I had seen at Verona how he left the most important discussions to shut himself up all distraught with Monsieur de Gentz, to work on an article replying to the Constitutionnel or to the Débats. How many days would pass before the Imperial orders were transmitted? What would become of me? How anxious would it make my Paris friends? When the news leaked out, what would the papers not make of it? What extravagances would they not churn out? Equally, would Monsieur de Blacas be happy to see me in Prague? Would Monsieur de Damas not believe I came to displace him? Would Cardinal de Latil be at all concerned? Might that triumvirate not profit from this misfortune by having the gates closed to me rather than opened? Nothing easier: one word in the Governor's ear, a word I would never know about, would suffice.

And what if the courier returned empty-handed? What if the package were lost? What if the Supreme Burgrave judged it inappropriate to reply to me? What if he were absent? What if no one dared to act on his behalf? What would become of my passport? Where could I win recognition? Munich? Vienna? What post station would grant me horses? I would be imprisoned in Waldmünchen.

These were the *dragons* that flew through my mind; I thought the more of my separation from all I held dear: I had too little time left to live to waste that little. Horace says: '*Carpe diem*: seize the day.' A counsel of pleasure at twenty, it is a counsel of commonsense at my age.

Weary of *chewing over all these options in my mind*, I suddenly heard the noise of a crowd outside; my inn was in the village square. Through the window I saw a priest bearing the last sacrament to a dying man. What did the affairs of kings, their servants, or the world matter to the dying? Everyone left their work and followed the priest; young girls, old women, children, mothers with infants in arms, repeated the prayers for those in their death throes. Arriving at the dying man's door, the priest gave the benediction with the viaticum. His assistants fell to their knees, making the sign of the cross and bowing their heads. The passport to eternity will not be disregarded by He who distributes the bread and opens the inn to the traveller.

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 11

#### A Chapel – My room at the inn – A description of Waldmünchen

21st of May, 1833.

Though I had been seven days without sleep, I could not stay in my room; after barely an hour, leaving the village in the direction of Ratisbon I noticed a white chapel, to the right, in the midst of a wheat field; I directed my steps there. The door was shut; through a slanting window an altar with a cross was visible. The date the sanctuary had been built, 1830, was written over the doorway; a monarchy was overthrown in Paris and a chapel constructed at Waldmünchen. Three banished generations had been about to enter exile a hundred and fifty miles from this new chapel erected to a crucified king. Millions of events are played out at the same moment: what then of the Negro sleeping beneath a palm tree on the banks of the Niger, the white man falling at the same instant to a dagger-blow on the banks of the Tiber? What of he who weeps in Asia or he who laughs in Europe? What of the mason who built this chapel, the Bavarian priest who exalted Christ in 1830, and the demolisher of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, he who pulled down the cross in 1830? Events only matter to those who suffer or profit from them; they are a matter of indifference to those who know nothing of them, or those they do not touch. Some race of shepherds, of Abruzzo, without descending from the mountains, has seen the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Goths, the generations of the Middle Ages, and the men of the present age pass by. That race has never merged with the successive inhabitants of the valley, and only religion has ascended to them.

Returning to the inn, I propped myself between two chairs in the hope of sleeping, but in vain; the stirrings of my imagination overcame my tiredness. I thought ceaselessly of my courier: dinner had nothing to do with it. I lay there amongst the lowing of herds being driven back to the fields. At ten at night another noise arose; the watchman sang out the time; fifty dogs barked; after which they went off to their kennels as if the watchman had ordered them to be silent; I recognized German discipline.

Civilization has progressed in Germany since my trip to Berlin: the beds are now almost long enough for a man of average height; but the top-sheet is always sewn to the coverlet, and the bottom-sheet, too narrow, ends by wrinkling and rolling itself into a ball in a very bothersome manner. But since I am in Auguste Lafontaine's country I will imitate his genius; I wish to inform farthest posterity of the contents, in my day, of my room in the inn at Waldmünchen. Know then distant cousin, that the chamber is in the Italian style, with bare whitewashed walls, without paneling or tapestries, with a wide skirting board or colored surround at the base, the ceiling with a triple-circled rose, a cornice painted with blue rosettes with a garland of chocolate-colored bay leaves, and below the cornice, on the wall, leafage in a red design on an American green background. Here and there, little French and English framed engravings: two windows with white cotton curtains: between the windows, a mirror: in the middle of the room a table to seat at least twelve, furnished with an oilcloth covering, its background olive printed with roses and other flowers: six chairs with cushions in red tartan material: a chest of drawers and three beds around the walls; and in a corner, near the door, an earthenware stove glazed black, its sides presenting the arms of Bavaria in relief, surmounted by a container in the shape of a Gothic crown. The door is furnished with a complex iron contraption capable of securing prison doors while foiling skeleton-keys, lovers, and thieves. I point out, to travellers, this excellent room, where I wrote the above inventory which rivals that in The Miser; I recommend it to future Legitimists who may be brought to a halt by descendants of the

wild red Alpine goat of Haselbach. This page of my *Memoirs* will delight the modern school of literary realism.

Having counted, by the light of my lamp, the moldings on the ceiling, gazed at the engravings of the *Milanese Girl*, the *Beautiful Swiss Girl*, the *French Girl*, and the *Russian Girl*, the former King of Bavaria, and the former Queen of Bavaria, who looks like a lady I know but whose name I find it impossible to remember, I snatched a few moments sleep.

Emerging from my bed, on the 22nd at seven, a bath removed the rest of my fatigue, and I had only to amuse myself with my little market town, like Captain Cook with some Pacific isle he had discovered.

Waldmünchen is built on the slope of a hill; it resembles a decayed village in the State of Rome. Several house fronts painted with frescoes, a vaulted gateway at the entrance and exit to the main street, no visible shops, and a dried-up fountain in the square. Dreadful paving is interspersed with large slabs and cobbles, such as one no longer sees in the *neighborhood of Quimper-Corentin*.

The people, whose appearance is rural, wear no particular costume. The women have their heads bare or wrapped in a kerchief like Parisian dairy-maids; their skirts are short; they have bare feet and legs like the children. The men are dressed partly like the laborers in our towns, partly like the ancient peasantry. God be praised! They only wear hats, and the infamous cotton caps of our bourgeois are unknown here.

Every day in Waldmünchen there is, *ut mos* (according to custom), an interesting spectacle at which I was present for the early stages. At six in the morning, an old shepherd, tall and lean, goes round the village to various locations; he sounds a straight horn, six feet long, which from afar looks like a speaking trumpet or a shepherd's crook. He first sounds three quiet melodious metallic notes then he blows a kind of gallop or cattle-call (*ranz des vaches*), imitating the lowing of oxen and the grunting of pigs. The fanfare ends on a sustained note rising in pitch.

Suddenly from every gateway pour cows, heifers, calves and bulls; lowing, they invade the village square; they climb or descend from all the surrounding streets, and, formed up in column, they take their usual route to pasture. A squadron of pigs grunting like wild boars wheels round after them. Sheep and lambs, bleating, herded in line, compose the third section of the band; geese form the reserve: in a quarter of an hour all have vanished.

In the evening, at seven, the horn is heard again; the herds return. The order of the troop has altered: the pigs form the vanguard, to the same musical accompaniment; some, sent out as scouts, run around randomly or halt in every corner. The sheep file by; the cows, with their sons, daughters and husbands, end the procession; the geese waddle alongside. All these creatures regain their dwellings, none mistakes its own gate; but there are Cossacks who maraud around, scatter-brains who frisk about and balk at entering, bullocks that refuse to stay with a group that is not from their stable. Then come the women and children with their little goads; they force the laggards to rejoin the crowd, and the refractory to submit to rule. I rejoiced at the spectacle, as once Henri IV at Chauny was amused by a cowherd named *Everyman* who gathered in his herd to the sound of a trumpet.

Many years ago, at Madame de Custine's residence, the Château de Fervaques in Normandy, I occupied Henri IV's room; my bed was enormous: the Béarnais had slept there with some Florette; I acquired a love of royalty there, since I did not possess it naturally. Water-filled moats surround the château. The

view from my window extended over meadows which border the little river of Fervaques. In the meadows one morning I saw an elegant sow of extraordinary whiteness; she had the look of Prince Marcassin's mother. She was lying on fresh dewy grass at the foot of a willow tree; a young boar was gathering a little fine ragged moss with his ivory tusks, and depositing it over the sleeper; he repeated this operation until the white sow was entirely hidden: only her black feet emerged from the coverlet of verdure in which she was shrouded.

There is a tribute to a creature of ill repute that I would be ashamed to have written about at such length, if Homer had not sung it. Indeed I realize that this section of my *Memoirs* is nothing less than an Odyssey: Waldmünchen is Ithaca; the shepherd is the faithful Eumaeus with his swine; I am the son of Laertes, returning from my travels on land and sea. I would perhaps have done better to get drunk on the nectar of Evanthe, to eat the flower of that plant moly, to languish in the land of the Lotus Eaters, rest with Circe or obey the song of the Sirens singing: '*Come, come to us.*'

22nd of May 1833.

If I were twenty, I would seek adventures in Waldmünchen as a means of shortening the hours; but at my age one no longer has a silken ladder except in memory, and one only climbs walls with the shades. Once I was a great friend of my body; I advised him to live wisely, in order to show himself a fine and vigorous fellow in forty years' time. He mocked these soulful sermons, insisted on amusing himself and would not have given two figs to reach the day when he might be called a *well-preserved individual*: '*To the Devil!*' he cried, '*what would I gain by sparing myself in youth in order to enjoy life's delights when no one wanted to share them with me?*' And he made himself happy enough.

So I am forced to take him as he is now: I took him out walking on the 22nd to the south-east of the village. Among the marshlands we followed a little stream of water that drives the mills. They make cotton fabrics at Waldmünchen; lengths of these fabrics were laid out in the meadows; girls, charged with dampening them ran up and down in bare feet on the white zones preceded by the water spurting from their watering cans, like gardeners watering a flower bed. Beside the brook I thought of my friends, I was moved at memory of them then I asked myself what they might be saying about me in Paris: '*Has he arrived? Has he seen the Royal Family? Will he soon be home?*' And I deliberated on whether to send Hyacinthe in search of fresh butter and brown bread, to eat with cress beside a spring under a pollarded alder. My life has never been more ambitious than that: why has fortune hitched my coat-tails to her wheel, along with a piece of royal mantle?

Returning to the village, I passed the church; two shrines outside border the road; one shows St. Peter in Chains with a collection box for prisoners; I gave a few kreutzers in memory of Pellico's gaol and my cell at the Police Prefecture. The other shrine offered a scene from the Garden of Olives: a scene so moving and sublime that here it is not spoilt even by the grotesque treatment of the figures.

I hurried my dinner and rushed off to evening prayers, summoned by bells. Turning the corner of the narrow street by the church, a glimpse can be had of the distant hills: a gleam of light still showed on the horizon and that dying light shone from the direction of France. A profound sentiment pierced my heart. When will my pilgrimage end? I was wretched enough crossing German territory while returning from the Army of the Princes, triumphant enough when as Ambassador to Louis XVIII I travelled to Berlin;

after so many diverse years, I have penetrated surreptitiously into the depths of that same Germany to seek the King of France, exiled once more.

I entered the church: it was utterly dark; with not even a lamp alight. Through the darkness, I only made out the sanctuary, in a Gothic recess, by its deeper obscurity. The walls, altars, pillars, seemed charged with ornamentation and shadowy paintings; the nave was full of dense rows of benches.

An old woman was telling the *paternoster* on her rosary in a loud voice in German; women young and old, whom I could not see, replied with *Ave Maria*. The old woman articulated well, her voice was distinct, her accents grave and full of pathos; she was two rows away from me; her head bowed slowly in the shadows each time she pronounced the word *Christo*, in adding a prayer to her paternoster. The rosary was followed by Litanies of the Virgin; the *ora pro nobis*, chanted in German (*bitte für uns*) by the invisible worshippers, sounded in my ears like the word hope (*espérance, espérance, espérance!*) We scurried off; I went to my bed with hope; I have not held her in my arms for a long time; but she never ages, and one always loves her despite her infidelities.

According to Tacitus the Germans believed night to be more ancient than day: *nox ducere diem videtur*. Yet I have counted brief night and never-ending days. The poets tell us also that *Sleep* is the brother of *Death*: I am not so sure of that, but certainly *Old Age* is his closest relative.

On the morning of the 23rd, Heaven added sweetness to my misfortune: Baptiste told me that a notable person in the village, a brewer, had three daughters, and possessed my works somewhere among his barrels. When I went out, the *gentleman* and two of *his daughters* watched me go by: where was the third young lady? A letter of admiration for Atala once arrived for me, from Peru, written in some lady's own hand, she being a cousin of the sun; but to be known at Waldmünchen, to a wolf's-beard of Haselbach, was something a thousand times more glorious: it is true that this occurred in Bavaria, a few miles from Austria that mocked at my fame. Do you know what would have happened to me if my excursion into Bohemia had only been my own idea? (But why would I have been in Bohemia on my own account?) Halted at the frontier, I should have returned to Paris. A man contemplated a voyage to Peking; one of his friends saw him on the Pont-Royal in Paris: '*What! I thought you were in China? – I am back; those Chinese made difficulties for me in Canton, I left them there.*'

As Baptiste is recounting my triumph, a funeral bell summons me to the window. The priest goes by, preceded by a cross; affluent men and women, the men in cloaks, the women in robes and black wimples. Taken up three doors from mine, the corpse is carried to the cemetery: after half an hour, the members of the cortege return minus the cortege. Two young women have their handkerchiefs to their eyes; they are weeping for their father; the dead man was the one who had received the viaticum on the day of my arrival.

If my *Memoirs* reach Waldmünchen when I am no longer alive, the family bereaved today will know the date of its past grief. From the depths of his bed the dying man may have heard the sound of my carriage; it is the only sound from me he would have heard on this earth.

The crowd having dispersed, I took the road I had seen the procession take in the direction of the winter sunrise. First I came across a pond of stagnant water, from the edge of which ran a swift stream like life



on the brink of the tomb. Some crosses behind a hillock revealed the cemetery to me. I climbed a hollow lane, and a gap in the wall led me to the sacred enclosure.

Mounds of clay represented the bodies beneath the soil; crosses rose here and there: they marked the exits by which the travellers had entered the world beyond, as buoys at the mouth of a river indicate the open roads to vessels. A poor old man was digging a child's grave; alone, sweating, his head bare, he did not sing, he did not jest like the clowns in *Hamlet*. Further on was another hole near to which lay a ladder, a crowbar and a rope for the descent into eternity.

I went straight up to this hole which seemed to cry out to me: '*Here's a fine opportunity!*' At the bottom of the grave lay the fresh coffin covered with a few spadefuls of soil and awaiting the rest. A piece of canvas was bleaching on the grass: the dead need their shrouds.

Far from his country, the Christian always has a means of suddenly transporting himself there: by visiting man's last sanctuary, in the churchyard: the cemetery is a family field, and religion the universal homeland.

It was midday when I returned; given all my calculations the courier would not be back before three; nevertheless every sound of hoof-beats sent me rushing to the window: the nearer the hour approached, the more I convinced myself that the permit would not arrive.

To pass the time, I asked for my bill; I set myself to totting up the number of pullets I had eaten: greater men than I have not disdained to do so. Henry Tudor, the seventh of that name, in whom the wars of the *White Rose* and the *Red Rose* terminated, as I was to unite the white and the tricolor cockade, Henri VII initialed every page of an account book I have seen: '*To a woman for three apples, twelve pence; for having found three hares, six shillings and eight pence; to Master Bernard, the blind poet, one hundred shillings* (that was more than Homer got); *to a little man at Shaftsbury, twenty shillings.*' We have plenty of little men these days, but they cost more than twenty shillings.

At three, the hour at which the courier might return, I went with Hyacinthe to the Haselbach road. It was windy, the sky was scattered with clouds that passed across the sun and cast shadows on the fields and pinewoods. We were preceded by a crowd from the village who as they marched raised the noble dust of the army of the Grand-Duke of Quirocia, so valiantly fought by the Knight of La Mancha. A Calvary signaled the top of one of the road's ascents, from there a long ribbon of road could be seen. Sitting in a hollow, I questioned Hyacinthe who sat at the foot of the cross: '*Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?*' Several village carts seen in the distance made our hearts beat faster; as they approached they revealed themselves as empty, like everything that bears our dreams. I had to return to the inn and there dined sadly. A plank offered itself to the shipwrecked man: the diligence would pass by at six; might that not bring a reply from the Governor? Six o' clock rang out: no diligence. At quarter past six, Baptiste entered my room: '*The ordinary courier from Prague has just arrived; there is nothing for Monsieur.*' The last ray of hope was extinguished.

## BOOK XXXVI

### CHAPTER 12

A letter from Count Choteck – The peasant girl – Departure from Waldmünchen – The Austrian Customs – Entering Bohemia – The pine forest – A conversation with the moon – Pilsen – The highways of the north – The sight of Prague

Baptiste had scarcely left my room when Schwartz appeared waving a large letter with a large wax seal in the air, and shouting: ‘*Foilà le berrmis.*’ (*Here’s the permit.*) I leapt on the dispatch, and tore open the envelope; it contained the permit and a note from Monsieur de Blacas with the Governor’s letter. Here is the letter from Count Choteck:

‘Prague, 23rd May 1833.

*Monsieur le Vicomte,*

*I am sorry that on your entry to Bohemia you have experienced problems and delays in your journey. But there are strict orders in existence at our borders regarding all travellers from France, orders that you yourself will find quite normal in the current circumstances, and I can only approve the conduct of the customs chief at Haselbach. Despite the extent of your celebrity in Europe, you must excuse this employee who had not the honor to know you personally, the more so as your passport was only stamped for Lombardy and not for all of the Austrian States. As for your plan to travel to Vienna, I have written today to Prince Metternich, and will hasten to communicate his response to you when you arrive in Prague.*

*I have the honor to enclose a reply from Monsieur le Duc de Blacas, and I beg you if you will to receive the assurances of the deepest consideration with which I have the honor to be, etc.*

COUNT CHOTECK’

This reply was polite and fitting; the Governor could not criticize the junior officer who after all had only been doing his duty. I had myself in Paris foreseen the trouble my old passport might cause. As for Vienna, I had spoken with a political objective, in order to reassure Count Choteck and show him I was not seeking to evade Prince Metternich.

At eight in the evening, on the 23rd of May, I entered my carriage. Who would believe it? It was with a degree of regret that I left Waldmünchen! I was already accustomed to my hosts; my hosts had grown accustomed to me. I knew all the faces at the windows and doors; when I went out they welcomed me with a kindly air. The neighborhood turned out to watch my calash depart, which was as dilapidated as the monarchy of Hugh Capet. The men doffed their caps; the women made me little signs of congratulation. My adventure was the subject of village conversation; everyone took my part: the Bavarians and the Austrians detest each other; the former were proud to allow me through.

Several times, I had noticed a young Waldmünchen girl, with a face like that of a virgin painted in Raphael’s early manner, at the door of her cottage; her father, with the bearing of an honest farmer, saluted me brushing the ground with his wide-brimmed felt hat, and gave me good day in German which I cordially returned in French: standing behind him, his daughter would blush while gazing at me over the old man’s shoulder. I found my virgin once more, but she was alone. I waved adieu; she remained

motionless; she seemed astonished; I wished to believe that her thoughts were full of some vague regret: I left her behind like some wild flower, seen beside a ditch at the side of the road, which perfumes the journey. I drove through Eumaeus' herds; he bared his head grown grey in the service of the sheep. He had completed his journey; he had returned to sleep among his ewes, while Ulysses departed to continue his wanderings.

Before I received the permit I had said: *'If I obtain it, I will confound my persecutor.'* Arriving in Haselbach, it so happened that like Perrin Dandin my wretched kindness intervened; I had not the heart to triumph over him. Like a true coward I huddled in a corner of the carriage while Schwartz presented the Governor's permit; I would have suffered too much from the customs man's confusion. He, for his part, did not show himself, and even failed to have my wallet searched. May peace be with him! May he forgive me the abuse I gave him, yet because of a residual rancor I will not erase him from my *Memoirs*.

Leaving Bavaria by this border-post, a vast dark pine forest serves as the gateway to Bohemia. Mists strayed along the valleys, the light faded, and the western sky was the color of peach blossom; the horizon almost touched the earth. Light fails at that latitude, and, with the light, life itself; all is dull, chilly, and pallid; winter seems to charge summer with guarding the frost until he returns. A little slice of glowing moon gave me pleasure; all was not lost, since I had found a face I knew. She had an air of saying to me: *'What! You again! Remember how I've gazed on you in other forests? Remember the tender things you said to me when you were young? Indeed, you have not spoken too ill of me. Why your silence now? Where are you going so alone and so late? You will never leave off chasing your career then?'*

O Moon, you are right; but if I spoke well of your charms, you know the services you have rendered me; you lit my footsteps when I walked with my phantom love; today my head is silvered like your face, and yet you are astonished to find me alone! And you scorn me! Yet I have passed whole nights enveloped in your veils; dare you deny our meeting among the lawns and beside the sea? How often you have seen my eyes fixed passionately on yours! Ungrateful mocking light, do you ask me where I am going so late: it is harsh to reproach me for my endless voyaging. Oh! Though I travel like you, I do not grow young again as you do, you who return to the bright crescent of your cradle every month! I will know no new moon: my waning has no other end but my utter vanishing, and when I am extinguished, I will not relight my flame as you do yours!

I travelled all night; I passed through Teinitz, Stankau and Staab. On the morning of the 24th I passed through Pilsen, *through a fine barracks*, in the Homeric style. The town is marked by that air of melancholy that reigns in this country. At Pilsen, Wallenstein hoped to seize the scepter; I was also in quest of a crown, but not for myself.

The countryside is sliced and intersected by hills, called mountains in Bohemia; mounds whose tops are marked by pines, and whose slopes are delineated by the green of the crops.

Villages are sparse. A few fortresses, starved of prisoners, jut from the rocks like aged vultures. From Zditz to Beraun the hills on the right grow bald. You traverse a village, the streets are spacious, the post stations well served with mounts; everything proclaims a monarchy imitating the former France.

What sort of forest rides did Jan the Blind, at the time of Philippe de Valois, and the Ambassadors of King George at the time of Louis, pass through? What good are these modern German roads? They

remain deserted since neither history, art, nor the climate, summon strangers to their solitary highways. For commerce, it is needless for the public roads to be so large and costly to maintain; the richest traffic on earth that of India and Persia is borne on the backs of mules, asses and horses, over narrow scarcely-visible tracks, through mountain chains or the desert sands. The vast roads of today, in sparsely populated countries, serve solely for warfare; overflows for the use of the new Barbarians who, emerging from the north with immense trains of guns, will inundate those regions favored by intellect and the sun.

Beraun is traversed by the little river of the same name, vicious as any little cur. In 1784, it reached the level marked on the walls of the post-house. After Beraun, a succession of gorges skirts the hills, then widens out at the entrance to a plateau. From this plateau the road plunges into a vaguely-outlined valley with a hamlet at its center. There a long ascent begins which leads to Duschnick, a post station and the last relay. Quickly descending towards the opposite hill, on whose summit rises a cross, Prague is revealed on either bank of the Moldau. It is in this city that the elder branch of the race of Saint Louis lives a life of exile, that the heir of their race begins a life of proscription, while his mother languishes in a fortress in the land from which he has been driven. Frenchmen! The descendant of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, she to whom your fathers opened the doors of the Temple, you have sent to Prague; you have decided not to retain among you this unique monument to greatness and virtue! O my aged King, you whom I choose, now that you have fallen, to call my master! O child whom I was first to call king, what will you say? How dare I present myself before you, I who am not banished, I who am free to return to France, free to sigh my last breath into that air which will burn my lungs when I breathe it again for the first time, I whose bones may rest in my native soil! Captive of Blaye, I go to meet your son!

**End of Book XXXVI**

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 1

The Castle of the Kings of Bohemia – A first interview with Charles X

*Prague, the 24th of May 1833.*

Entering Prague on the 24th of May at seven in the evening, I arrived at the Hôtel des Bains, in the old town on the left bank of the Moldau. I wrote a note to Monsieur le Duc de Blacas to alert him to my arrival; I received the following reply:

*‘If you are not too tired, Monsieur le Vicomte, the King would be delighted to receive you this evening, at nine forty-five; but if you wish to rest, it would give His Majesty great pleasure to see you tomorrow morning at eleven thirty.*

*Accept, I beg you, my deepest compliments.*

*This Friday, the 24th of May, at seven.*

#### *BLACAS D’AULPS’*

I did not wait to profit from the alternative offered me: at nine thirty I set off: an employee of the inn, who knew a few words of French, escorted me. I climbed through silent, sombre streets, with barely an echo, to the foot of the tall hill crowned by the Castle of the Kings of Bohemia. The edifice etched its dark mass on the sky; no light shone from the windows: it possessed something of the solitariness, the setting, and the grandeur of the Vatican, or of the Temple Mount of Jerusalem seen from the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The only sound was that of my footsteps and those of my guide; I was obliged to stop at intervals on the staged stone landings, so fast was the pace.

The more I climbed the more I could see of the city below. The chain of history, the fate of mankind, the destruction of empires, the designs of Providence presented themselves to my mind, mingling themselves with memories of my own life: having explored dead ruins I was summoned to the sight of living ones.

Arriving at the summit on which the Hradschin is built, we passed through an infantry post whose guards were positioned next to the exterior wicket. Beyond this door we penetrated a square courtyard, surrounded by battlements, uniformly deserted. We filed to the right down a long corridor on the ground floor lit at intervals by glass lanterns attached to the face of the walls, as in a barracks or a convent. At the end of this corridor a staircase ascended, at the foot of which two sentries walked to and fro. As I was climbing to the second storey, I met Monsieur de Blacas who was descending. With him I entered Charles X’s apartments; there, two more grenadiers were on guard. Those foreign guardsmen, those white uniforms at the King of France’s door made a painful impression on me: the idea of a prison rather than a palace came to mind.

We passed three darkened, virtually unfurnished rooms: I imagined I was wandering in the dreaded Monastery of the Escorial. Monsieur de Blacas left me in the third room in order to go and alert the King, according to the etiquette of the Tuileries. He returned to seek me, led me to His Majesty’s office, and withdrew.

Charles X approached me, and held out his hand cordially saying: *‘Good day, good day, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, I am delighted to see you. I was waiting for you. You had no need to come tonight, as you must be very tired. Do not remain standing: let us sit. How is your wife?’*

Nothing tugs at the heart more than simple words among the highest ranks of society, and in the great catastrophes of life. I began to weep like a child; I had difficulty stifling the sound of my crying with my handkerchief. All the harsh things I had determined to say, all the vain and merciless philosophy with which I counted on arming my discourse, failed me. I, to become an instructor to misfortune! I, to dare lord it over my King, my white-haired King, my proscribed and exiled King, preparing to leave his mortal remains on foreign soil! My aged Prince took me again by the hand seeing the distress of his *merciless enemy*, of that *fierce opponent* of the July decrees. His eyes were moist; he made me sit beside a little wooden table on which there were two candlesticks; he sat near the same table, turning his good ear towards me to hear me more clearly, alerting me in that way to his years which united common infirmity with the extraordinary calamities of his life.

I found it impossible to recover my voice, as I gazed, in the residence of the Emperors of Austria, at the sixty-eighth King of France bent beneath the weight of those reigns and his seventy-six years: of those years, twenty-four had been spent in exile, five on a tottering throne; the monarch was ending his last days in a last exile, with a grandson whose father had been assassinated and whose mother was a prisoner. Charles X, in order to relieve the silence, asked me a few questions. Then I explained the object of my journey, briefly: I told him I was bearing a letter from Madame la Duchesse de Berry, addressed to Madame la Dauphine, in which the captive of Blaye confided the care of her children to that prisoner of the Temple, as one having experience of misfortune. I added that I also had a letter for the children. The King replied: *‘Do not give it to them; they are partly unaware of what has happened to their mother; you shall give me the letter. Anyway we will talk about all this tomorrow at two: go and get some rest. You will see my son and the children at eleven, and dine with us.’* The King rose, wished me goodnight and withdrew.

I left; I rejoined Monsieur de Blacas in the ante-room; my guide was waiting on the stairs. I returned to my inn, descending the streets, over the slippery paving stones, with as much rapidity as I had shown slowness in ascending.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 2

Monsieur le Dauphin – The Children of France – The Duke and Duchess de Guiche – The Triumvirate -  
Mademoiselle

*Prague, the 25th of May 1833.*

Next day, the 25th, I received a visit from Monsieur le Comte de Cossé, who was lodging in my inn. He told me about the arguments at the Palace regarding the education of the Duke of Bordeaux. At half past ten I climbed to the Hradschin; the Duc de Guiche led me to the Dauphin's apartments. I found him thin and aged; he was dressed in a threadbare blue coat, buttoned to the chin, and which, too large for him, seemed to have been bought at a second-hand clothes store: the poor Prince made me feel extremely sorry for him.

Monsieur le Dauphin needed courage; his obedience to Charles X alone prevented him from showing himself to be, at Saint Cloud and Rambouillet, what he had shown himself to be at Chiclana: his unsociability has increased. He can hardly bear the sight of a new face. He often asks the Duc de Guiche: *'Why are you here? I need no one. There is no mouse-hole small enough to hide me.'*

He has often said: *'Let no one speak of me; let no one be concerned about me; I am nothing; I wish to be nothing. I have an income of twenty thousand francs: it is more than I need. I need only think about my health and about making a good end.'* He often says: *'If my nephew needs me, I will serve him with my sword; but I have signed my abdication, against my wishes, in order to obey him; I will not repeat it; I will sign nothing more; let them leave me in peace. My word is enough: I never lie.'*

And that is true: his lips have never proffered an untruth. He reads much; he is quite learned, even in languages; his correspondence with Monsieur de Villèle during the War in Spain is prized, and his correspondence with Madame la Dauphine, intercepted and printed in the *Moniteur*, makes one love him. His probity is unshakeable; his religiosity is profound; his filial piety shows true virtue; but an unconquerable shyness inhibits the Dauphin's proper employment of his abilities.

To put him at his ease, I avoided discussion of politics and only enquired after his father's health; a subject on which he was voluble. The change in climate between Edinburgh and Prague, the King's long-standing gout, the waters of Teplitz which the king would take, and the good they would do him, was the content of our conversation. Monsieur le Dauphin watched over Charles X as if he were an infant; he kissed his hand when he approached, asked how he had slept, picked up his handkerchief, talked loudly so he might hear, prevented him from eating what might disagree with him, made him put on or take off his coat depending on the coldness or warmth of the weather, accompanied him on his walks and brought him back. I was careful to speak of nothing else: of the July Days, the fall of an empire, the future of the monarchy, not a word. *'It is eleven o'clock,'* he said to me: *'You shall go and see the children; we will meet at dinner.'*

Escorted to the tutor's apartments, the doors opened: I saw Baron de Damas, with his pupil; Madame de Gontaut with Mademoiselle, Monsieur Barrande, Monsieur Lavilatte and other devoted followers; everyone rose. The young Prince, who was frightened, looked askance at me, and looked at his tutor as if to ask what he should do, in what manner he should act in this peril, or how to obtain permission to speak

to me. Mademoiselle smiled a half-smile with a shy but independent air; she seemed attentive to her brother's actions and gestures. Madame de Gontaut seemed proud of the education she had given her. Having saluted the two children I advanced towards the orphan and said: *'May Henri V permit me to lay my respectful homage at his feet. When he recovers his throne, he may remember that I had the honor to say to his illustrious mother; Madame, your son is my King. Thus I was the first to proclaim Henri V King of France, and a French jury, by acquitting me, has allowed my proclamation to stand. Long live the King!'*

The boy, astounded to hear himself saluted as King, to hear me speak of his mother whom no one spoke of, recoiled into the arms of Baron de Damas, while pronouncing a few words emphatically but in a low voice. I said to Monsieur de Damas:

*'Monsieur le Baron, my speech seems to have astonished the King. I see he knows nothing of his mother's courage and is unaware of what his servants have had the happiness to do on occasion for the cause of the Royal Legitimacy.'*

The tutor replied: *'We teach Monseigneur what loyal subjects, such as you are yourself Monsieur le Vicomte....'* He failed to complete the sentence.

Monsieur de Damas hastened to announce that the moment for study had arrived. He invited me to the riding lesson at four.

I went to see Madame la Duchesse de Guiche, who lodged some distance away in another part of the Palace; it took more than ten minutes to find the way there from corridor to corridor. As Ambassador to London, I had given a small supper for Madame de Guiche, then in all the brilliance of her youth and followed by a crowd of admirers; in Prague I found her altered, but her facial expression pleased me more. Her coiffure became her beautifully; her hair, plaited in little tresses like those of an odalisque or a Sabine medallion, fastened with a headband, adorned both sides of her brow. In Prague, the Duchess and Duke de Guiche represented beauty linked to adversity.

Madame de Guiche had been informed of what I had said to the Duc de Bordeaux. She told me that they would part with Monsieur de Barrande; that it was a question of summoning the Jesuits; that Monsieur de Damas had suspended but not abandoned his plans.

There was a triumvirate composed of the Duc de Blacas, Baron de Damas, and Cardinal Latil; this triumvirate wished to control any future reign by isolating the young King, having him raised according to principles, and by men, antipathetic to France. The remaining inhabitants of the Palace conspired against the triumvirate; the children themselves were at the head of the opposition. However the opposition took on various nuances; the Gontaut party was absolutely not the Guiche party; the Marquise de Bouillé, a defector from the Berry Party, ranged herself on the side of the triumvirate with the Abbé Moligny. Madame la Dauphine, as the head of the group of impartial observers, was not exactly favorable to the party of Young France, represented by Monsieur Barrande; but as she spoiled the Duc de Bordeaux, she often inclined to his side, and supported him against his tutor.

Madame d'Agoult, devoted body and soul to the triumvirate, had no other influence with the Dauphine than that of her presence and persistence.



Having paid my court to Madame de Guiche, I went to see Madame de Gontaut. She was waiting for me with Princess Louise.

Mademoiselle resembles her father a little: her hair is blonde; her blue eyes have a fine expressiveness; small for her age, she is not as well-formed as her portraits show. Her whole person is a mixture of child, young woman and Princess: she gazes, lowers her eyes, and smiles with a naive coquetry allied with art: one does not know whether to read her fairy stories, make a declaration, or talk to her with the respect due to a queen. Princess Louise supplements agreeable talents with considerable knowledge: she speaks English and has started to learn German; she even has something of a foreign accent and *exile* has already influenced her speech.

Madame de Gontaut presented me to my little King's sister: innocent fugitives, they looked like two gazelles hiding amongst the ruins. Mademoiselle Vachon, the assistant governess, an excellent and distinguished woman, arrived. We sat down, and Madame de Gontaut said: *'We can speak, Mademoiselle knows everything; she deplures what we see just as we do.'*

Also Mademoiselle said to me: *'Oh, Henri was very stupid this morning: he was afraid! Grandpapa said to us: "Guess who you will see tomorrow: he is a power on this earth!" We replied: "Well, is it the Emperor?" "No," said Grandpapa. We tried, but could not guess. He said: "It is the Vicomte de Chateaubriand. I slapped my forehead for not having guessed." And the Princess slapped her forehead, blushing like a rose, smiling spiritually with her lovely moist and tender eyes; I was dying of a respectful desire to kiss her little white hand. She went on:*

*'You did not hear what Henri said to you when you recommended him to remember you. He said: "Oh yes, always!" But he said it so quietly! He was afraid of you and afraid of his tutor. I was making signs to him, did you see? You will be happier this evening; he will speak; just wait.'*

This solicitude of the Princess on behalf of her brother was charming; I was almost guilty of lèse-majesté. Mademoiselle noticed it, which gave her a sweet and graceful air of conquest. I reassured her as to the impression Henri had made upon me. *'I was very pleased'*, she said, *'to hear you speak of Mama before Monsieur de Damas. Will she soon be released from prison?'*

You know I had a letter from Madame la Duchesse de Berry for the children, but did not speak of it to them since they were unaware of the latest details of her captivity. The King had demanded the letter of me; I considered that I was not permitted to hand it to him, and ought to take it to Madame la Dauphine, to whom I had been sent, and who was then taking the waters at Carlsbad.

Madame de Gontaut repeated to me what Madame de Cossé and Madame de Guiche had said. Mademoiselle groaned with childish gravity. Her governess having spoken of Monsieur Barrande's dismissal and the probable arrival of a Jesuit, Princess Louise crossed her hands and said with a sigh: *'That will be very unpopular!'* I could scarcely prevent myself from smiling; Mademoiselle began to smile also, still blushing.

A few moments remained before my audience with the King. I clambered back into my calash and went to find the Supreme Burgrave, Count Chotek. He lived in a country house a few miles outside the city, on the Palace side. I found him at home and thanked him for his letter. He invited me to dine with him on Monday, the 27th of May.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 3

#### A conversation with the King

Returning to the Palace at two, I was conducted to the King by Monsieur de Blacas as on the previous evening. Charles X received me with his usual kindness and that elegance of manner that his years made more noticeable in him. He made me sit down once more at the little table. Here are the details of our conversation: *‘Sire, Madame la Duchesse de Berry ordered me to seek you out and present a letter to Madame la Dauphine, I do not know what the letter contains, even though it is unsealed; it is written with lemon-juice, as is that to the children. But in my two letters of instruction, the one ostensible, the other confidential, Marie-Caroline explained her intentions. She places her children, during her captivity, as I said to Your Majesty yesterday, under the especial protection of Madame la Dauphine. Madame la Duchesse de Berry charged me moreover with giving her an account of the education of Henri V, whom they call the Duc de Bordeaux here. Finally, Madame la Duchesse de Berry declares that she has contracted a secret marriage with Count Hector Lucchesi-Palli, of an illustrious family. These secret marriages of Princesses, of which there are several examples, have not deprived them of their rights. Madame la Duchesse de Berry asks to retain her rank as a French Princess, the Regency and her guardianship. When she is freed, she proposes to come to Prague to embrace her children and lay her respects at Your Majesty’s feet.’*

The King responded harshly to me. I took his reply, for better or worse, as a complaint.

*‘Pardon me, Your Majesty, but it seems that someone has inspired prejudice against her: Monsieur de Blacas must be my august client’s enemy.’*

Charles X interrupted me: *‘No, but she treated him badly, because he prevented her committing various stupidities, and undertaking foolish enterprises.’* – *‘It is not given to everyone’,* I replied, *‘to commit stupidities of that kind: Henri IV fought like Madame la Duchesse de Berry, and like her he had not always enough forces.’*

*‘Sire,’* I continued, *‘though you may not wish Madame de Berry to be a French Princess, she will be one despite you; everyone will always call her the Duchesse de Berry, the heroic mother of Henri V; her courage and her suffering tower above all; you cannot place yourself in the ranks of her enemies; you cannot follow the Duc d’Orléans’ example, and wish to destroy the mother and her children with one blow: is it so hard for you to forgive a woman her glory?’*

*‘– Well, Monsieur l’Ambassadeur,’* said the King with a kindly emphasis, *‘let Madame la Duchesse de Berry wing her way to Palermo; let her live there martially with Monsieur Lucchesi, in the whole world’s sight, then we can tell the children their mother is married; she can come and embrace them.’*

I felt I had pushed the matter hard enough; the principal points were three-quarters won, the preservation of her title and admission to Prague at a more or less distant time: sure of completing my work with Madame la Dauphine, I changed the subject of conversation. Stubborn spirits balk at pressure; with them one spoils everything by trying to carry everything to a final conclusion.

In the interest of the future, I turned to the Prince's education; on that subject, I was barely understood. Religion has made a solitary of Charles X; his ideas are cloistered. I slipped in a few words on the capacity of Monsieur Barrande and the incapacity of Monsieur de Damas. The King said: *'Monsieur Barrande is a learned man, but he takes too much on; he was selected to teach the exact sciences to the Duc de Bordeaux, and he teaches everything, history, geography, Latin. I summoned the Abbé MacCarthy, in order to share Monsieur Barrande's labor; he has died; I have cast my eye on another instructor; he will arrive soon.'*

These words made me shudder, since the new instructor could evidently only be a Jesuit replacing a Jesuit. That, in the current state of French society, the idea of placing a disciple of Loyola with Henri V should have entered Charles X's head is reason to despair of that race.

When I had recovered from my astonishment, I said: *'Does the King not fear the effect on public opinion of an instructor chosen from a celebrated but slandered society?'*

The King cried out: *'Bah! Aren't they with the Jesuits even so?'*

I spoke to the King about the elections and the Royalists' desire to know his wishes. The King replied: *'I cannot say to someone: Take the oath against your conscience. Those who believe they ought to swear it are no doubt acting with good intentions. I have no objection to anyone, my dear friend; their past matters little to me, if they wish sincerely to serve France and the Legitimacy. Republicans have written to me in Edinburgh; I accepted, as to their person, all they asked of me; but they wished to impose on me conditions of government, and I rejected them. I will never yield my principles; I wish to leave my grandson a throne more solidly founded than mine. Are the French any happier and freer today than they were under me? Do they pay less tax? What a milch cow France is! If I were permitted a fraction of the things permitted to Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans, what an outcry! What maledictions! They conspired against me, they confessed it: I chose to defend myself...'*

The King paused as if embarrassed by the multitude of thoughts, and for fear of saying something that would offend me.

It was all very well, but what did Charles X understand by *principles*? Was he taking account of the cause of the conspiracies, true or false, hatched against his government? He resumed, after a moment's silence: *'How are your friends the Bertins? They have not protested on my behalf, you know: they are very harsh towards an exiled man, who did them no harm as far as I know. But, my dear friend, I wish none to anyone; everyone behaves according to his understanding.'*

This sweetness of temperament, this Christian indulgence on the part of a King, hounded and slandered, brought tears to my eyes. I wanted to say a few words about Louis-Philippe. *'Oh!'* the King responded... *'Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans...he decided...what would you have? ...men are like that.'* Not a bitter word, not one reproach, not one complaint emerged from the lips of an old man three times exiled. And yet French hands had cut off his brother's head and pierced his son's heart; so implacable have those hands been for him in re-invoking the past!

I praised the King, great-hearted and compassionate of voice. I asked him if it had entered his mind to finish with all those secret correspondences, to dismiss all those agents who, for forty years, had deceived the Legitimacy. The king assured me that had resolved to put an end to those impotent machinations; he

had already, he said, named several serious individuals, among whom I was one, to compose a sort of council in France fit to establish the truth. Monsieur de Blacas would explain it all to me. I begged Charles X to gather his followers and grant me a hearing: he referred me to Monsieur de Blacas.

I drew the King's attention to the arrival of Henri V's majority; I told him that a declaration made then would be useful. The King, who privately did not want such a declaration, invited me to present him with a draft. I replied with respect, but firmly, that I would never formulate a declaration at whose foot my signature did not appear below that of the King. My reason was that I did not wish to have placed to my account later changes introduced into some act by Prince Metternich and Monsieur de Blacas.

I suggested to the King that he was too far from France, that they would have time to carry out two or three revolutions in Paris before he could know of them in Prague. The King replied that the Emperor had left him free to choose his place of residence anywhere in the Austrian States, except the Kingdom of Lombardy. *'But,'* His Majesty added, *'the inhabitable cities in Austria are all much the same distance from France; in Prague I live rent-free, and my situation obliges me to take account of that.'*

A noble calculation that for a Prince who for five years had enjoyed a civil list of twenty millions, without mentioning his royal residences; for a Prince who had left to France the Algerian colony and the ancient heritage of the Bourbons, worth twenty-five to thirty millions in revenue!

I said: *'Sire, you loyal subjects have often thought that impoverished royalty might be in need; they are ready to contribute, each according to his wealth, in order to free you from dependence on a foreign power.'* – *'I think, my dear Chateaubriand,'* said the King, smiling, *'that you are scarcely richer than I. How did you pay for your journey?'* – *'Sire, it would have been impossible for me to reach you, if Madame la Duchesse de Berry had not ordered her banker, Monsieur Jaugé, to advance me six thousand francs.'* – *'That's too little!'* cried the King, *'do you need more?'* – *'No, Sire; I ought rather to do the right thing, and return something to the poor prisoner; but I scarcely know how to economize.'* – *'You were a magnificent Signor in Rome?'* – *'I always consumed conscientiously whatever the King gave me; there are barely two sous left.'* – *'You know that I still hold your Peer's salary on your behalf: you did not want it.'* – *'No Sire, because you have followers poorer than I. You resolved the matter of twenty thousand francs that remained of my debts as Ambassador with your great friend Monsieur Lafitte.'* – *'I owed it to you,'* said the King, *'you had not forgone your salary merely by resigning as Ambassador, which, by the way, did me harm enough.'* – *'That's as may be, Sire, owing to me or no, Your Majesty, by coming to my aid, did me a service at that time, and I will return the money when I can; but not at present, since I am poor as a rat; my house in the Rue d'Enfer is not paid for. I live any old how with Madame de Chateaubriand's paupers, while waiting for those lodgings I have already visited, on behalf of Your Majesty, at Monsieur Gisquet's. When I pass through a town, I first discover if there is a hospice; if there is one, I rest easy: 'board and lodging, what more does he need?'*

*'– Oh, it shall not rest there. How much do you need, Chateaubriand, to be rich?'*

*'– Sire, you would be wasting your time; you might give me four millions in the morning, and I would have not a groat by evening.'*

The King patted my shoulder with his hand: *'A fine thing! But what the devil do you do with your money?' 'Faith, Sire, I have no idea, for I've no vices and never spend anything: it's incomprehensible! I am so foolish that on entering the Foreign Office I would not take the twenty-five thousand francs on a new appointment, and on leaving I scorned to pocket any profound secrets! You speak of my wealth, to avoid speaking of your own.'*

*'It's true,' said the King, 'here, in turn, is my confession: in consuming my capital in equal amounts year by year, I calculated that by the age I am now I would be able to live my life out without needing help from anyone. If I should find myself in any distress, I would prefer, as you suggest, to have recourse to Frenchmen rather than foreigners. They have offered me loans, among others one for thirty millions, which would be honored in Holland; but I knew that such a loan, placed on the principal European markets, would devalue French funds; that prevented me endorsing the plan: nothing which would affect public wealth in France would suit me.'* Nobel sentiments expressed by a King!

In this conversation, one notes Charles X's generosity of character, gentleness of manner, and commonsense. For a philosopher, it would have been a curious sight, that of a *subject* and a *sovereign* interrogating each other as to their wealth and making a mutual confession of their poverty in the depths of a Palace borrowed from the Kings of Bohemia!

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 4

Henri V

*Prague, the 25th and 26th of May 1833.*

Emerging from this meeting, I attended Henri's riding lesson. He rode two horses, the first trotting, without stirrups, the second executing with stirrups various turns, without holding the reins, and with a stick passed behind his back between his arms. The boy is daring and altogether elegant in his white breeches, jacket, little ruff, and cap. Monsieur O'Hegerty the elder, his riding instructor, shouted: *'What's with that leg there! It's like a stick! Relax your leg! Good! Detestable! What's the matter with you today? etc. etc.'* The lesson over, the young page-king reined in his horse in the middle of the riding school, and brusquely doffing his cap to salute me where I stood, in the gallery with Baron Damas and a few Frenchmen, leapt lightly and elegantly to the ground like a little Jehan de Saintr  .

Henri is slender, agile, well made; he is blond; he has blue eyes with a look in his left one which recalls his mother's gaze. His movements are brusque; he addresses you freely; he is curious and questioning; he has none of that pedantry the newspapers attribute to him; he is just a little boy like all little boys of twelve. I complimented him for his fine appearance on horseback: *'You've seen nothing,'* he said to me, *'you should see me on my black horse; he is a wicked devil; he kicks and throws me, I remount, we leap the fence. The other day, he knocked himself and his leg swelled up as big as that. Isn't the horse I rode last a beauty? But I was not on form.'*

Henri detests Baron Damas at the moment, whose appearance, character and ideas are antipathetic to him. He often becomes very angry with him. Following these fits of temper the Prince has to do penitence; he is sometimes condemned to remain in his room: a foolish punishment. Abb   Moligny comes to confess the rebel and tries to make him fear the devil. The obstinate lad chooses not to hear and refuses to eat. Then Madame la Dauphine reasons with Henri who eats and mocks the Baron. This form of education creates a vicious circle.

What Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux lacks is a light hand which would lead him without his feeling the rein, a tutor who was his friend rather than his master.

If the race of Saint Louis was, like that of the Stuarts, a specific family driven out by revolution, and confined on an island, the destiny of the Bourbons would soon be something foreign to fresh generations. Our former royal power is not of that kind; it represents ancient royalty: the political, moral and religious past is born of that power and gathers around it. The fate of a race which was so involved in the social order as was, and so related to the social order which is to be, can never be a matter of human indifference. But any destiny that race was to endure, the situation of the individuals that formed it, and to whom an inimical fate could offer no respite, would be deplorable. In perpetual adversity, those individuals must travel in obscurity a course parallel to that of their family's glorious past.

There is nothing sadder than the lives of fallen Kings; their days are no more than a tissue of reality and fiction: remaining sovereigns at their own hearth, among their servants and their memories, they no sooner cross the threshold of their home than they find ironic truth at the door: James II or Edward Stuart, Charles X or Louis d'Angoul  me within, without they become James or Edward, Charles

or Louis, without title, like those men of sorrows their neighbors; they have the dual inconvenience of living a Court life and a private life: the flattery, favoritism, intrigue and ambition of the one, the affronts, distress, and gossip of the other: it is a continuous masquerade with valets and ministers changing clothes. Moods are embittered by the situation, hopes weakened, regrets increased; the past is recalled; there are recriminations; there is self-reproach all the more bitter in that its expression is no longer surrounded by good taste derived of noble birth and the propriety of superior wealth; one becomes common through common suffering; the cares of a lost kingdom degenerate into the machinations of a household: Popes Clement XIV and Pius VI could never establish peace in the Pretenders' ménages. Those uncrowned interlopers remained on guard in the midst of society, spurned by Princes as infected with adversity, suspect to nations as tainted by power.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 5

#### Dinner and an evening at the Hradschin

I went off to dress: I had been warned that I could retain my frock coat and boots when dining with the King; but misfortune is too noble in rank for one to approach it with familiarity. I arrived at the Palace at a quarter to six; the table was laid in an ante-room. I found Cardinal Latil there. I had not met him since he had been my guest in Rome, at the Ambassador's residence, during the meeting of the Conclave, after the death of Leo XII. What a change in my fate and that of the world between the two dates!

He was ever the *priestling* with rounded belly, pointed nose, and pallid visage, such as I had seen it, angered, in the Chamber of Peers, an ivory knife in his hand. It was said he had no influence and was fed in a corner while taking knocks; perhaps so; but there are other sorts of credit; that of a Cardinal is no less certain though hidden; he acquired it, this credit, through long years in residence with the King and from his character as a priest. The Abbé de Latil had been an intimate confidante; the memory of Madame de Polastron attached itself to the confessor's surplice; the charm of his last human weakness and the sweetness of his first religious feeling endured in the old monarch's heart.

Monsieur de Blacas, Monsieur Alfred de Damas, brother of the Baron, Monsieur O'Hegerty the elder, and Madame de Cossé arrived in succession. At six o'clock precisely the King appeared, followed by his son; they hastened to table. The King placed me on his left; he had Monsieur le Dauphin on his right; Monsieur de Blacas sat facing the King, between the Cardinal and Madame de Cossé; the other guests were distributed at random. The children only dine with their grandfather on Sundays: which is to deprive them of the only happiness that remains in exile, the intimacy of family life.

The dinner was meagre and quite poor. The King praised a fish from the Moldau to me, which was worthless. Four or five valets de chambre in black prowled about like lay brothers in a refectory; there was no maitre d'hôtel. Each took what was before him and offered it from the dish. The King ate well, asked for what he wished and himself served whatever he was asked for. He was in a good humor; any fear he may have had of me had passed. The conversation consisted of a round of commonplaces, on the Bohemian climate, the health of Madame la Dauphine, her journey, the celebration of Whit Sunday which would take place the following day; not a word of politics. Monsieur le Dauphin, his nose deep in his plate, occasionally emerged from his silence, and addressed Cardinal Latil: '*Prince of the Church, was not the gospel for this morning according to St Matthew? – No, Monseigneur, according to St Mark. – What? St Mark?*' A grand dispute between St. Mark and St. Matthew, and the Cardinal was beaten.

Dinner lasted almost an hour; the King rose; we followed him to the salon. There were newspapers on a table; everyone sat down and began reading this and that as in a café.

The children entered, the Duc de Bordeaux led by his tutor, Mademoiselle by her governess. They ran to embrace their grandfather then sped towards me; we ensconced ourselves in a window seat with a superb view overlooking the city. I renewed my compliments on the riding lesson. Mademoiselle hastened to tell me once more what her brother had said to me, which I had not caught, namely that one could not come to a judgement since the black horse was lame. Madame de Gontaut came and sat with us, Monsieur de Damas nearby, lending an ear, in an amusing state of anxiety, as if I would eat his pupil, let fall some phrase concerning the freedom of the Press, or to the glory of Madame la Duchesse de Berry. I would



have laughed at the fears I inspired in him, if I could have laughed at any poor wretch after Monsieur de Polignac. Suddenly Henri said to me: *‘Have you seen any diviner’s snakes?’* – *‘Monseigneur must mean boa constrictors: there are none in Egypt nor at Tunis the only places in Africa I have visited; but I saw plenty of snakes in America.’* – *‘Oh, yes’*, said Princess Louise, *‘the rattlesnake, in the Génie du Christianisme.’*

I bowed to Mademoiselle, in thanks. *‘But you have seen other snakes?’* Henri continued. *‘Are they very nasty?’* – *‘Some of them, Monseigneur, are very dangerous others have no venom and can be taught to dance.’*

The two children drew close to me in delight, fixing their fine bright eyes on mine.

*‘And then there are glass-snakes,’* I said. *‘They are superb and not harmful; they have the transparency and fragility of glass; they shatter when they are touched.’* – *‘Can the pieces not be joined together again?’* said the Prince. – *‘No, brother’*, Mademoiselle replied for me. – *‘You went to Niagara Falls?’* Henri continued. *‘Was there a terrible roaring? Can you go down it in a boat?’* – *‘Monseigneur, an American delighted in launching himself down it in a large canoe; another American, they say, threw himself into the cataract; he did not perish the first time, but he tried again and was killed at the second attempt.’* The two children raised their hands and cried: *‘Oh!’*

Madame de Gontaut spoke: *‘Monsieur de Chateaubriand has been to Egypt and Jerusalem,’* Mademoiselle clapped her hands and drew near me again. *‘Monsieur de Chateaubriand,’* she said, *‘tell my brother about the Pyramids and the Tomb of Our Lord.’*

As best I could I told them about the Pyramids, the Sacred Tomb, the Jordan and the Holy Land. The children’s attentiveness was striking: Mademoiselle cupped her pretty face in her hands, her elbows almost resting on my knees, and Henri, perched on a tall chair, wriggled, his legs dangling.

After this fine conversation on serpents and cataracts, pyramids and the Holy Tomb, Mademoiselle said: *‘Will you ask me a history question?’* – *‘So, history is it?’* – *‘Yes, question me about a year, the most obscure year in the whole history of France, except the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which we have not started yet.’* – *‘Oh,’* cried Henri, *‘I prefer a famous year: ask me something about a famous year.’* He was less sure of the matter than his sister.

I began by obeying the Princess and said: *‘Well, can Mademoiselle tell me what was happening and who ruled France in 1001?’* Behold brother and sister thinking, Henri clutching his cheek, Mademoiselle covering her face with her hands, in a manner customary with her, as if she were playing *hide and seek*, then she suddenly revealed her youthful happy expression, her lips smiling, her gaze limpid. She was the first to reply: *‘It was Robert who reigned, Gregory V was Pope, Basil III Emperor of the East...’* – *‘And Otto III was Western Emperor’* cried Henri desperate not to be left behind by his sister, and he added: *‘Veremond II in Spain.’* Mademoiselle cutting him short said: *‘Ethelred in England.’* – *‘Not at all,’* said her brother, *‘it was Edmund Ironside.’* Mademoiselle was right; Henri was wrong by a few years favoring Ironside who delighted him; but it was no less remarkable.

*‘What of my famous year, then?’* Henri asked in a half-angry tone. – *‘That’s right, Monseigneur: what happened in 1593?’* – *‘Bah,’* cried the young Prince. *‘That was Henri IV’s recantation.’* Mademoiselle blushed at not being able to answer first.

Eight o'clock struck: the voice of Baron de Damas cut short our conversation, as the hammer of the timepiece, striking ten, once suspended my father's paces in the great hall of Combours.

Sweet children! The old crusader related his adventures in Palestine to you, but not by the hearth of Queen Blanche's castle! To find you, he came to tread an icy foreign threshold, with his palm branch and his dusty sandals. Blondel sang in vain at the foot of the tower of the Dukes of Austria; his voice could not re-open the gates of your country to you. Young exiles, the voyager in distant lands has hidden from you a part of his story; he has not told you that, poet and prophet, he crossed the wilds of Florida and the mountains of Judea with as much desperation, sadness and passion as you possess of hope, joy, and innocence; that there was a day when, like Julian, he sent his blood towards Heaven, blood of which the God of Mercy kept a few drops, to purchase those he had delivered to the god of curses.

The Prince, led away by his tutor, invited me to his history lesson, set for the Sunday, at eleven in the morning; Madame de Gontaut withdrew with Mademoiselle.

Then another kind of scene commenced: future royalty, in the person of a child, had just involved me in his games; past royalty, in the person of an old man, now had me attend on his. A Whist party was begun, illuminated by two candles in the corner of a dark room, between the King partnering the Dauphin, and the Duc of Blacas partnering Cardinal Latil. I was the only spectator except for O'Hegerty the riding instructor. Through the open window-shutters twilight mingled its pallor with that of the candle-light: the monarchy waned between those two expiring flames. A profound silence reigned, except for the fall of the cards and an occasional annoyed exclamation from the King. Playing cards were modelled on those of the Latins to enliven Charles VI's adversity, but under Charles X there was no longer an Ogier or a Lahire to give their names to these distractions of misfortune.

The game over, the King wished me goodnight. I passed by the empty sombre rooms I had traversed the previous day, the same stairs, the same guards, and descending the terraces of the hill, regained my inn despite getting lost among the night-time streets. Charles X remained shut in the dark mass of buildings I had left behind me: nothing could convey the melancholy of his isolation and his years.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 6

#### Visits

*Prague, the 27th of May 1833.*

I greatly needed a rest; but Baron Capelle, arriving from Holland, took a room next to mine, and was in haste.

When a torrent falls from a great height, the abyss it creates and by which it is swallowed draws the gaze and renders us dumb; but I have neither patience with nor pity for Ministers whose foolish hands allowed Saint Louis' crown to fall into the gulf, as if the waves would return it! Those Ministers who claim to be opposed to the decrees are the most culpable; those who say they have been the most moderate are the least innocent; if they saw so clearly, why did they not resign? *'They did not wish to desert the King; Monsieur le Dauphin would have considered them cowards.'* A poor excuse; they could not tear themselves away from their portfolios. Whatever they may say, nothing else was at the root of that immense disaster. And what superb tranquility since the event! One of them scribbles a History of England, after having neatly settled the history of France; another mourns the life and death of the Duc de Reichstadt, having dispatched the Duc de Bordeaux to Prague.

I knew Monsieur Capelle: it is right to remember that he was left impoverished; his claims did not exceed his worth; he would willingly have said like Lucian: *'If you read me in hopes of breathing amber and hearing the song of the swans.....I swear by the gods I have never spoken in such an elevated strain.'* These days modesty is a rare enough virtue, and Monsieur Capelle's only mistake was being made a Minister.

I received a visit from Monsieur le Baron de Damas: the virtues of that brave officer had gone to his head; religious congestion had addled his brains. He makes fateful alliances: the Duc de Rivière on his deathbed recommended Monsieur de Damas as the Duc de Bordeaux's tutor; the Prince de Polignac was a member of that set. Incapacity is a kind of Freemasonry with lodges in every land; its delving creates pits from which shafts lead, into which States vanish.

Domesticity is so natural at Court that Monsieur de Damas, in selecting Monsieur de Lavillate, decided to grant him no title but that of First Valet of the Chamber to Monseigneur le Duc de Bordeaux. On first meeting, I took a liking to this military man with greying teeth, a faithful mastiff, charged with barking at the sheep. He belonged to that troop of loyal *grenade-bearers* whom the terrifying Marshal de Montluc esteemed, and of whom he said: *'There's nothing of the back-office about them.'* Monsieur de Lavillate will be dismissed for his sincerity not his brusqueness: barrack room brusqueness can be tolerated; often adulation in camp swells an independent character's pride. But with the old soldier of whom I speak it was merely frankness; he would have redeemed his moustache with honor, if he had borrowed thirty thousand *piastres* against them as Juan de Castro did. His forbidding expression was simply that of liberty; his manner merely warned that he was prepared. Before putting their army in the field, the Florentines warned the enemy by ringing the bell called Martinella.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 7

Mass – General Skrzynecki

*Prague, the 27th of May 1833.*

I had formed the intention of hearing Mass in the Cathedral, in the precincts of the Palace; detained by visitors, I only had time to visit the basilica of the erstwhile Jesuits. There was singing accompanied by an organ. A woman, near me, possessed a voice whose tones made me turn my head. At the moment of Communion, she covered her face with both hands and did not go up to the altar table.

Alas! I have explored so many churches in the four corners of the globe, without ridding myself, even at the Savior's tomb, of the rough hair-shirt of my thoughts. I described Aben-Hamet wandering in the Christian mosque at Cordoba: *'He glimpsed a motionless figure at the base of a pillar, which he at first mistook for a statue on a tomb.'*

The original of the knight Aben-Hamet glimpsed was a monk I encountered in the church of the Escorial, whose faith I envied. Yet who knows the tempests in the depths of that meditative soul, or what pleas rose towards the *Holy and Innocent Pontiff*? I had just admired, in the empty sacristy of the Escorial, one of Murillo's loveliest Virgins; I was with a lady; she was first to point out to me this monk deaf to the sound of the passions that passed before him in the sanctuary's tremendous silence.

After Mass in Prague I looked for a calash: I took the road laid out among the old fortifications by which carriages climbed to the Palace. Gardens were being created on the ramparts: the harmonious sound of the trees will replace the din of the Battle of Prague: all will be delightful in forty years or so: may it be hoped that Henri V will not remain here long enough to enjoy the shade of their unborn leaves!

Before dining next day at the tutor's, I thought it would be polite to go and visit Countess Chotek: I would have found her charming and beautiful, even if she had not quoted passages of my writings from memory.

I went to Madame de Guiche's in the evening: there I met General Skrzynecki and his wife. He gave me an account of the Polish Insurrection and the battle of Ostrolenka.

When I rose to leave, the General asked permission to shake my *venerable* hand and embrace the *patriarch of liberty and the Press*; his wife wished to embrace me as the author of the *Génie du Christianisme*; the monarchy generously received a fraternal kiss from the republic. I experienced the satisfaction due an honest man; I was happy to waken a variety of titles to noble sympathy in the hearts of strangers, to be pressed to the breast of husband and wife in turn for the sake of liberty and religion.

On Monday the 27th, in the morning, the *opposition* came to inform me I would not be seeing the young Prince: Monsieur de Damas had tired his pupil, dragging him from church to church obeying the stations of the Jubilee. That exhaustion served as pretext for a holiday and motivated a course of action: they would hide the boy from me.

I employed the morning wandering around the city. At five I went to dine with Count Chotek.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 8

#### Dinner at Count Chotek's

Count Chotek's mansion, built by his father (who was also Supreme Burgrave of Bohemia) has the external appearance of a Gothic chapel; nothing is original these days, everything is copied. From the drawing room there is a view of the gardens; they slope downwards into a valley: the light is always insipid, a greyish sun as in the rocky depths of the Northern mountains where gaunt Nature wears a hair shirt.

The table was set in the *pleasure-ground*, beneath the trees. We dined hatless: my head, which so many storms have insulted while carrying off my hair, was sensitive to the sighs of the breeze. While I tried to do justice to the meal, I could not prevent myself from watching the birds and the clouds flying above our feast; travellers embarked on the winds and secretly connected to my destiny; voyagers, the objects of my envy, whose aerial flight my gaze cannot follow without a kind of tenderness. I was more akin to those intruders wandering the skies than the earthbound guests sitting beside me: happy those anchorites who had a crow to serve them their food!

I cannot tell you about Prague society, since I only experienced it at this dinner. There was a lady there much in vogue in Vienna, and very spiritual they assured me; she seemed bitter and foolish, though there was still something youthful about her, like those trees in summer that retain the dried fruit from flowers they bore in the spring.

Thus I only know the manners of that country as they were in the sixteenth century, as recounted by Bassompierre: he was in love with Anna-Esther, aged eighteen, widowed six months previously. He spent five days and six nights, in disguise, concealed in a room with his mistress. He played court tennis with Wallenstein at the Hradschin. Being neither Wallenstein nor Bassompierre, I pretended neither to empire nor love: modern Esthers want an Ahasueras who can, disguised though he may be, rid himself of his *domino* at night: one cannot lay aside the mask of the years.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 9

#### Whit Sunday – The Duc de Blacas

*Prague, the 27th of May 1833.*

Leaving the dinner, at seven, I went to see the King; there I found the same people as on the previous day, except for Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux, who they said was suffering from his Sunday exertions. The King was reclining on a sofa, and Mademoiselle was sitting on a chair at Charles X's knee, he stroking his grand-daughter's arm while telling her stories. The young Princess listened attentively: when I appeared, she looked at me with a smile, like a person saying in a rational way: *'Really, I must amuse grand-papa.'*

*'Chateaubriand,'* cried the King, *'I did not see you yesterday?'* – *'Sire, I was advised too late that Your Majesty had done me the honor of inviting me to dinner: and then, it was Whit Sunday, a day on which it is not permitted me to see Your Majesty.'* – *'Why is that?'* said the King. *'Sire, it was on Whit Sunday, nine years ago, that on presenting myself to pay my court to you, they forbade my entrance.'*

Charles X appeared moved: *'No one will drive you from the Palace in Prague.'* – *'No, Sire, since I see none of those faithful servants here, who dismissed me in the days of prosperity.'* Whist commenced, and the day ended.

Following the game I returned the Duc de Blacas' visit. *'The King tells me we should talk,'* he said. I replied that the King not having judged it appropriate to convoke his council before whom I would have been able to develop my ideas on the future of France and the Duc of Bordeaux's coming of age, I had nothing to say. *'His Majesty has no council,'* Monsieur de Blacas replied with a tremulous laugh, his eyes full of self-satisfaction, *'there is only myself, myself alone.'*

The Grand Master of the Wardrobe had the highest opinion of himself: a French malady. To listen to him, he has done everything, he can do anything; he arranged the Duchesse de Berry's marriage; he disposes of kings; he leads Metternich by the nose; he has Nesselrode by the throat; he rules Italy; his name is engraved on an obelisk in Rome! He has the keys of the Conclave in his pocket; the last three Popes owe their exaltation to him; he is so knowledgeable about public opinion, he tailors his ambition to his abilities so well, that through attending on Madame la Duchesse de Berry, he was presented with a diploma naming him Chief Councillor to the Regency, First Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs! And this is how those poor wretches understand France and the century.

Yet Monsieur Blacas is the most intelligent and moderate of that crowd. In conversation he is reasonable: he is always of your opinion: *You think so! That's precisely what I was saying yesterday. We have exactly the same idea!* He complains of his servitude; he is weary of affairs, he would like to live in some unknown corner of the earth, to die there at peace with the world. As for his influence over Charles X, don't speak of it; people imagine he controls Charles X: what error! He can do nothing with the King! The King will not listen; the King refuses something in the morning; in the evening he agrees it, without knowing why he has changed his mind, etc. While it is Monsieur de Blacas who tells you this nonsense, it is *true*, because he never thwarts the King; but he is not *sincere*, because he only inspires in Charles X wishes which agree with that Prince's inclinations.

For the rest, Monsieur de Blacas has courage and honor; he is not without generosity; he is loyal and devoted. In assuming high aristocracy and entering into riches, he has taken on their allure. He is very well born; he came from a poor but ancient house, known for poetry and warfare. His stiff manner, his aplomb, and his rigorous sense of etiquette have preserved for his masters that nobility which can easily be lost in adversity: at least, in the Museum that is Prague, inflexible armor holds upright a body which would otherwise fall. Monsieur de Blacas does not lack a certain amount of energy; he handles business affairs expeditiously; he is ordered and methodical. A connoisseur, well-versed in various branches of archaeology, an amateur of the arts with no imagination, and an icy libertine, he is not stirred even by his own passions: his sang-froid would be an attribute of the Statesman, if his sang-froid were other than his confidence in his own genius, and his genius betrays his confidence: one senses in him a great lord aborted, as one feels with his compatriot La Valette, Duc d'Épernon.

Whether there is a Restoration or no; if there is to be a Restoration Monsieur de Blacas returns with titles and honor; if there is not, the fate of the Grand Master of the Wardrobe lies outside France completely; Charles X and Louis XIX will die; he will be old, that is Monsieur de Blacas; his children will remain companions to the exiled Prince, illustrious visitors to foreign courts. God be praised for everything!

Thus the Revolution, which elevated and destroyed Bonaparte, enriches Monsieur de Blacas: that is some compensation. Monsieur de Blacas, with his long immobile and colorless face, is the contractor of funeral pomp to the monarchy; he buried it at Hartwell, he buried it at Ghent, he re-buried it in Edinburgh and will bury it again in Prague, or elsewhere, always watching over the spoils of the high and noble dead, as the peasants on the coast gather shipwrecked objects that the sea throws on their shores.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 10

#### DIGRESSIONS: A description of Prague – Tycho Brahe - Perdita

*Prague, the 28th and 29th of May 1833.*

On Tuesday, the 28th of May, the history lesson at which I was to be present, at eleven, not taking place, I found myself free to wander or rather review the city which I had already seen more than once in my coming and going.

I do not know why I imagined Prague as nestling in a gap in the mountains casting dark shadows over a cauldron of houses: Prague is a smiling city overlooked by twenty-five to thirty elegant towers and steeples; its architecture recalls a Renaissance town. The lengthy domination of the Emperors over Cisalpine countries has filled Germany with artists from those countries; the Austrian villages are villages of Lombardy, Tuscany or the drier parts of Venice; you would think yourself in a region of Italy, if, in the farms with their great bare rooms, a stove did not replace the sun.

The view from the Palace windows is very pleasant; on one side you can see orchards in a cool valley with green slopes, enclosed by the city battlements, which fall to the Moldau, rather as the walls of Rome descend from the Vatican to the Tiber; on the other side, you discover the city itself traversed by the river, the river adorned upstream by an island with plantations, and embracing an isle downstream in leaving behind the northern suburbs. The Moldau flows into the Elbe. A boat taking me on board at the Prague Bridge could land me by the Pont-Royal in Paris. I am not the work of centuries and kings; I have neither the weight nor the duration of the obelisk that the Nile is sending to the Seine at this very moment; to tow my galley the sash of the Tiber Vestal would suffice.

The bridge over the Moldau, built in wood in 795 by Mnata was, at various times, rebuilt in stone. While I took the bridge's measure, Charles X walked by on the pavement; he carried an umbrella under his arm; his son accompanied him like a hired *cicerone*. I said in the Conservateur that *they went to the window to watch the monarchy pass by*: I saw it pass by on the bridge in Prague.

In the buildings that compose the Hradschin Palace, you can view the historic rooms of a museum hung with the restored portraits and burnished weapons of the Dukes and Kings of Bohemia. Not far from the formless mass a pretty building is outlined against the sky adorned with one of those elegant *cinquecento* porticos: its architecture has the disadvantage of being at odds with the climate. If only one could slide those Italian palaces into a warm greenhouse with palm trees, during the Bohemian winter. I was always preoccupied with the idea of how cold they must be at night.

Prague, often besieged, taken and re-taken, is known to us militarily by the battle of that name and by the retreat in which Vauvenargues found himself involved. The city boulevards have been demolished. The Palace moats, on the side of the elevated plain, form deep straight notches planted with poplars. At the time of the Thirty Years War, these moats were full of water. The Protestants, entering the Palace on the 23rd of May 1618, flung two Catholic lords and the Secretary of State from the windows: the three swimmers were rescued. The Secretary, knowledgeable about human kind, asked a thousand pardons of one of the lords for having the misfortune to fall on top of him. In this month of May 1833, no one is



quite so polite: I know only too well what I would have said in similar case, I who have moreover been a Secretary of State.

Tycho Brahe died in Prague: would you, for all his science, want a false nose of leather or silver like his? Tycho consoled himself in Bohemia, like Charles X, by contemplating the heavens; the astronomer admired their workings, the King adored their maker. The star which appeared in 1572 (fading out in 1574) which altered successively from brilliant white to the yellowish-red of Mars to the leaden white of Saturn, offered Tycho's observations the spectacle of a world consumed by fire. What was the Revolution whose blast blew Louis XVI's brother to the tomb of the Danish Newton compared with the destruction of a globe, accomplished in less than two years? General Moreau came to Prague to concoct a Restoration with the Emperor of Russia which he, Moreau, would never see.

If Prague was beside the sea nothing would be more delightful; as Shakespeare struck Bohemia with his wand and made it a maritime country:

*'Thou art perfect then,' says Antigonus to a mariner, in The Winter's Tale, 'our ship hath touch'd upon the deserts of Bohemia?'*

*Antigonus* lands, charged with exposing to the elements a little girl to whom he addresses these words: *'Blossom, speed thee well! ...The storm begins... Thou'rt like to have a lullaby too rough!'*

Does it not seem as if Shakespeare has recounted in anticipation the history of Princess Louise, that young blossom; that new Perdita; transported to the deserts of Bohemia?

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 11

#### MORE DIGRESSIONS: Of Bohemia – Slavic and Neo-Latin Literature

*Prague, the 28th and 29th of May 1833.*

Confusion, blood, catastrophe, that is Bohemia's history; its dukes and its kings, embroiled in civil and foreign wars, struggled with their subjects, or grappled with the dukes and kings of Silesia, Saxony, Poland, Moravia, Hungary, Austria and Bavaria.

During the reign of Wenceslas VI, who roasted his cook because he grilled a hare badly, Jan Huss appeared, who having studied at Oxford, imported Wycliffe's doctrines. The Protestants, who search everywhere for ancestors without finding any, report that from the heights of his pyre Jan sang, prophesying the coming of Luther.

*'The world full of bitterness,'* says Bossuet, *'bore Luther and Calvin, whose teachings spread throughout Christendom.'*

The Christian and Pagan conflicts, Bohemia's precocious heresies, the import of foreign interests and foreign manners, resulted in a state of confusion favorable to tricksters. Bohemia passed for a land of sorcerers.

The ancient poems, discovered in 1817 by Monsieur Hanka, the librarian of the Prague museum, in the church archives of Königinhof, are celebrated. A young man I am delighted to cite, the son of an illustrious scholar, Monsieur Ampère, has communicated the spirit of these songs, while Celakowsky has given us many popular songs in the Slavic idiom.

Poles find the Bohemian dialect effeminate; it is a quarrel between the Dorian and the Ionic. A Breton from Vannes considers a Breton from Tréguier a barbarian. The Slavic like the Magyar lends itself to endless imitation: my poor Atala was dressed in a robe of Hungarian embroidery (*Point de Hongrie*); she also wore an Armenian dolman and an Arab veil.

Another kind of literature has flourished in Bohemia, a modern Latin literature. The Prince of this literature, Bohuslas Hassenstein, Baron Lobkowitz, born in 1462, taking ship at Venice in 1490, visited Greece, Syria, Arabia and Egypt. Lobkowitz preceded me to those celebrated places by three hundred and sixteen years, and like Lord Byron he sang of his pilgrimage. With what different spirits, hearts, thoughts and manners have we meditated, more than three centuries apart, on the same ruins and the same sunlight, Lobkowitz the Bohemian; Lord Byron the Englishman; and I a child of France!

At the time of Lobkowitz's voyage, marvelous monuments, now overthrown, were still standing. It must have been an astonishing sight that of the Barbarians in all their power, civilization laid low beneath their feet, the Janissaries of Mehmed II intoxicated with opium, victory and women, scimitars in hand, brows festooned with blood-stained turbans, lined up for the assault on the ruins of Egypt and Greece: and I saw the same barbarians, among those same ruins, struggling beneath the march of civilization.

In wandering the city and suburbs of Prague, the things I have just said printed themselves on my mind, as pictures from a projector do on a screen. But, whichever corner I found myself in, I could still see the

Hradschin, and the King of France leaning from the windows of that Palace, like a phantom overlooking all those shades.

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 12

I take leave of the King – Farewells – A letter from the children to their mother –  
A Moneychanger – The Saxon servant

*Prague, the 29th of May 1833.*

My review of Prague over, I went to dine at the Palace on the 29th of May at six o'clock. Charles X was in good humor. On leaving the table, and occupying a sofa in the sitting-room, he said: '*Chateaubriand, did you know that the National, which arrived this morning, claims that I had the right to issue my decrees?*' – 'Sire,' I replied, '*Your Majesty can throw stones at me with impunity.*' – The King, unsure, hesitated; then taking up the case: '*I have taken a certain matter to heart: you mistreated me devilishly badly in the first part of your speech to the Chamber of Peers.*' Then the King suddenly cried, without allowing me time to respond: '*Oh! It's finished! It's finished! ...An empty tomb at Saint-Denis...That's fine! ...Very well! Very well! ...Let's speak of it no more. I did not wish to hang on to it...it's over...it's done with.*' And he excused himself for having dared chance those few words.

I kissed the Royal hand with pious respect.

'*Let me say to you*' Charles X continued, '*that I may have been wrong not to defend myself at Rambouillet; I still had great resources...but I did not wish bloodshed on my behalf; I abdicated.*'

I did not challenge that noble excuse; I replied:

'*Sire, Bonaparte twice abdicated like Your Majesty, in order not to prolong the ills of France.*' Thus I sheltered my King's weakness behind Napoleon's glory.

The children entered, and approached us. The King spoke of Mademoiselle's age: '*Now, little scrap,*' he cried, '*you are fourteen already!*' – '*Oh to be fifteen!*' said Mademoiselle. – '*Well, what will you do then?*' said the King. Mademoiselle remained silent.

Charles X spoke of something: '*I don't remember that,*' said the Duc de Bordeaux. – '*I know, said the King, it happened the very day you were born.*' – '*Oh,*' replied Henri, '*a long time ago then!*' Mademoiselle leaning her head on his shoulder a little, raising her face towards her brother, said with a little ironic glance: '*You were born a long time ago then?*'

The children withdrew; I saluted the orphan: I was to leave that night. I said goodbye to him in French, English and German. How many languages will Henri learn in which to recount his wretched wanderings, and ask for bread and sanctuary from a stranger?

When the whist party began, I had my orders from His Majesty. '*Go and see Madame la Dauphine in Carlsbad,*' said Charles X. '*Farewell, My dear Chateaubriand. We shall have news of you from the papers.*'

I went from door to door offering my last respects to the inhabitants of the Palace. I saw the young Princess again with Madame de Gontaut; she gave me a letter for her mother at the end of which were written a few lines from Henri.

I was to leave on the 30th at five in the morning; Count Chotek had the kindness to have horses ordered for the journey: a mishap delayed me till midday.

I was carrying a letter of credit for two thousand francs payable at Prague; I presented myself at the house of a plump little Jew who gave cries of admiration on seeing me. He called his wife to help; she hurried in, or rather rolled to my feet; she sat down, short, dark and fat, opposite me, her arms like wings, gazing at me wide-eyed: if the Messiah had entered through the window, this Rachel could not have looked more joyous; I thought I might be threatened with a cry of *Hallelujah*! The money-changer offered me his fortune, letters of credit for the whole extent of the Israelite *diaspora*; he added that he would send the two thousand francs to my hotel.

The sum was not available on the evening of the 29th; on the morning of the 30th, when the horses were already harnessed, a clerk arrived with a parcel of bills, paper from various sources, which was discounted more or less on the spot, and which was useless outside the Austrian States. My account was detailed on a note which showed against the balance, *in good coin*. I was dumbfounded: ‘*What do you expect me to do with this?*’ I asked the clerk. ‘*How am I to pay for the horses and the cost of the inns with this?*’ The clerk ran off to obtain an explanation. Another clerk came, and carried out endless calculations for me. I sent the second clerk away; a third brought me Brabant gold-pieces. I left, on my guard against the tenderness I might inspire, in future, in the daughters of Jerusalem.

My calash was surrounded, under the archway, by the hotel staff, among whom was one pretty Saxon girl who played a piano, whenever she had the chance between chimes of the bell: try asking some Leonard in Limousin or Fanchon in Picardy to play *Tanti palpati* or *Moses’ Prayer* for you on the piano, or sing them!

## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 13

#### What I left behind in Prague

*Prague and en route, the 29th and 30th of May 1833*

I entered Prague with great apprehensions. I said to myself: *‘For us to fail it only needs God to place our fate in our own hands; God works miracles on behalf of men, but he entrusts their conduct to themselves, else he would be running the world in person: now, men can abort the fruit of these miracles. Sin is not always punished in this world; errors always are. Sin belongs to Mankind’s common and eternal nature; Heaven alone knows the truth, and sometimes reserves the right to punish. Faults of a limited and accidental nature are within the competence of the world’s narrow justice; that is why it is possible that the monarchy’s recent errors will be severely punished by mankind.’*

I said to myself further: *‘Royal families have fallen into irreproachable error through being infatuated with a false understanding of their own nature: they sometimes view themselves as families do who are mortal and private; as occasion demands they place themselves above the common law or inside the boundaries of that law. Have they violated the political constitution? They cry that they have the right, that they are the source of the law, that they cannot be judged by ordinary rules. Do they choose to commit a domestic fault, for example to provide the heir to the throne with a dangerous education? Their reply to criticism: “A private person can act as they wish towards their children, and we cannot!”*

*Well, no, you cannot! You are neither a divine family nor a private family; you are a public family; you belong to society. Royal errors do not harm royalty alone; they are damaging to the whole nation: a King makes a mistake and departs; but can the nation depart? Can it feel no pain? Do not those who remain attached to absent royalty, victims of their sense of honor, find their careers interrupted, their relatives hounded, their liberty constrained, and their existence threatened? Again, royalty is not in private ownership, it is common property, undivided, and third parties are involved in the fate of the throne. I fear that in the troubled situation inseparable from misfortune royalty has not understood these realities and has done nothing to permit its return at an advantageous moment.*

*Another point: while recognizing the immense advantages of the Salic Law, I do not deceive myself that the longevity of a race has serious disadvantages for nations and kings: for nations, because it links their destiny to that of their kings; for kings, because unending power intoxicates; they lose their sense of reality; everything which is not brought to their altar as suppliant prayer, humble wish, deep abasement, is impiety. Misfortune teaches them nothing; adversity is merely a plebeian coarseness lacking in respect, and disaster for them is merely insolence.’*

Happily I was in error: I found that Charles X had not fallen into the noble errors born of high society; I simply found him mired in the common illusions that attend on unexpected accident, and which are more understandable. Everything serves to solace the self-esteem of Louis XVIII’s brother: he sees his political world destroyed, and attributes that destruction rightly to his epoch, not his person: did not Louis perish? Did not the Republic fall? Was not Bonaparte twice constrained to abandon the theatre of glory did he not die a prisoner on an island? Are not the thrones of Europe threatened? What more then could he, Charles X, do than these fallible powers? He wished to defend himself against his enemies; he was alerted to danger by the police and symptoms of public unrest; he took the initiative; he attacked in order not to be

attacked. Have not the heroes of the Three Days' riots confessed that they conspired, that they had been playing out a comedy for fifteen years? Well! Charles thought it a duty to make an effort; he tried to save the French Legitimacy and with it the European Legitimacy: he engaged in battle, and he lost; he sacrificed himself to save the monarchy that is all. Napoleon had his Waterloo, Charles X his July Days.

So things presented themselves to the unfortunate monarch; he remained immutable, waiting on events which abased and humbled his spirit. Through a refusal to be moved, he attains a certain amount of grandeur: a man of imagination, he listens to you, he is not angered by your ideas: he has the air of entering into them, without entering into them at all. General axioms one sets in front of oneself like gabions; sheltering behind them, one fires on the intellects that march by.

The mistake many people make is to be persuaded, if events recur in history, that the human race is still in a primitive state; they confound *passions* and *ideas*: the former are the same in all centuries, the latter change with successive ages. Though the material effects of various actions are the same at various epochs, the causes which produce them are different.

Charles X considers himself a principle, and indeed there are men who, through living according to fixed ideas, identical from generation to generation, are no more than monuments. Certain individuals, through the lapse of time and their preponderance, become *things transformed into people*; the individuals perish when the things perish: Brutus and Cato were each the Roman Republic incarnate; they could not survive its destruction, no more than the heart can keep beating when exhausted of blood.

I have painted a portrait of Charles X elsewhere:

*'You have observed this faithful subject, for six years, this respectful brother, this tender father, so greatly afflicted by the death of one of his sons, so greatly consoled by the other! You know him, this Bourbon, noble heir of old France, the first to arrive after our misfortunes to set himself between you and Europe, a lily stem in his hand! Your eyes rest with love and kindness on this Prince, who, in middle age, has retained the charm and elegance of youth, and who now, decked with the crown, is still merely one more Frenchman among you! You repeat with emotion so many happy phrases uttered by this new monarch, who derives his grace in speaking from the loyalty of his heart!'*

*Who is there among us who would not entrust to him their life, fortune and honor? This man whom we would all wish to have as a friend, we now have as our king. Oh, let us try to help him forget his life's sacrifices! Let the crown weigh lightly upon the whitened hair of this Christian knight! As pious as Saint Louis, affable, compassionate and just as Louis XII, courteous as Francis I, frank as Henri IV, let him be happy in the good fortune that he has lacked for so many long years! Let the throne, where so many monarchs have experienced storms, be to him a place of repose.'*

Elsewhere I have further celebrated this same Prince: the subject alone has aged, but one can still recognize him behind the youthful touches of his portrait: age withers us while taking from us a certain poetic truth which makes the hue and bloom of our complexion, and yet one loves, despite itself, the face that has faded along with our own features. I have sung hymns to the descendants of Henri IV; I would willingly begin them again to combat contempt for the Legitimacy and take upon me its disgrace once more, if it were destined to be reborn. The reason being that legitimate constitutional monarchy has always seemed to me the smoothest and surest road to complete liberty. I thought and still think that I

would be carrying out the actions of a good citizen even in exaggerating the benefits of such a monarchy, in order, if it depended upon me alone, to grant it the duration necessary to accomplish the gradual transformation of society and morality.

I am doing Charles X's memory a service by opposing the pure and simple truth to whatever might be said of him in the future. The enmity of party will present him as a man disloyal to his oaths and a violator of public freedom: he is neither. He attacked the Charter in good faith; he does not consider himself and ought not to consider himself an oath-breaker; he had the firm intention of re-establishing the Charter after *saving it*, in his own way and as he understood it. Charles X is as I have described him: gentle, though subject to anger, good and tender to those he knows, amiable, free and easy, without animosity, always possessing a knight's devotion, nobility, and elegant courtesy, but dogged by frailty, which does not prevent a passive courage being shown, or the glory of dying well; incapable of following a good or bad resolution to the end; wedded to the prejudices of his century and his rank; a suitable king for an ordinary age; but in an extraordinary age a man not simply unfortunate, but condemned.



## BOOK XXXVII

### CHAPTER 14

#### The Duc de Bordeaux

As for the Duc de Bordeaux's supporters, they would picture him in the Hradschin as a King forever on horseback, always landing great blows with his sword. He certainly needs courage; but it is wrong to imagine that in this century right of conquest could be recognized, and that it is sufficient to act like Henri IV to recover a throne. Without courage, one cannot reign; with courage alone one can no longer reign: Bonaparte destroyed victory's authority.

An extraordinary role might be conceived for Henri V; supposing that at twenty he was to recognize his position and say to himself: *'I cannot remain inactive; I have a duty to fulfil towards the past, on behalf of my race, but am I obliged to trouble France solely in my own cause? Ought I to burden future centuries with the weight of centuries past? Let us decide the issue; let us inspire regret in those who unjustly exiled me in childhood; let us show them what I could do. It depends only on devoting myself to my country while consecrating myself afresh, whatever might be the outcome of the contest, to the principle of hereditary monarchy.'*

Then the scion of Saint-Louis might approach France imbued with the twin ideal of glory and sacrifice; he might descend upon it with the firm resolution of ending with a crown on his forehead or a bullet in his heart: in the latter case his inheritance would pass to Philippe. A triumphant life or a sublime death would re-establish the Legitimacy, stripped only of that which fails to comprehend the century and that which no longer fits the age. However, imagining my young Prince's sacrifice does little for me: if Henri V died without issue, I could recognize no other monarch in France!

I am left to dream: what I have imagined is not possible for the party who would have to adopt Henri: by reasoning in that way, I am placed in the position of considering an order of things beyond us; an order which, natural to an age of nobility and magnanimity, would appear these days as a novelistic exaggeration; as if I were to assent to the present invoking the age of the Crusades; now we are grounded in the sad reality of a diminished human nature. Such is the attitude of mind that Henri would meet with, apathy within France and invincible obstacles in the kingdoms beyond. He must submit then, he must consent to wait on events, at least he should avoid choosing a role that people would not hesitate to stigmatize as that of an adventurer. He will have to accommodate himself to a succession of mediocre events, and witness, without however allowing himself to be overwhelmed, the difficulties that surround him.

The Bourbons ruled after the Empire because of arbitrary succession: could one imagine Henri transported from Prague to the Louvre after the recent experience of total freedom? Deep down the French nation does not love such freedom; but it adores equality; it only admits absolute power for itself and through itself, and its pride demands that it only obey what it has itself imposed. The Charter attempted vainly to allow two nations which had become strangers to one another, ancient and Modern France, to live under the same laws; how, when prejudice has increased, can you make one France understand the other? You do not win minds by placing incontestable truths before their eyes.

If one listens to the voice of passion or ignorance, the Bourbons are the authors of all our ills; the reinstallation of the elder branch would be the re-establishment of domination by the Palace; the

Bourbons are the source of and accomplices to those oppressive treaties of which I have justifiably never ceased to complain: and yet nothing is more absurd than such accusations, in which dates are forgotten and facts grossly altered. The Restoration only exerted influence in diplomatic activity at the time of the first invasion. It is recognized that no one wanted that Restoration, since they negotiated with Bonaparte at Châtillon; that, if he had wished, he could have remained Emperor of the French. On his proving stubborn and for want of anything better they adopted the Bourbons who were on the spot. MONSIEUR, the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, then played a specific role in the transactions of the day; as one sees from the life of Alexander, we agreed to the 1814 Treaty of Paris.

In 1815 it was no longer a question of the Bourbons; they in no way took part in the despoilers' agreements at the second invasion; those agreements were the result of the breaking of that banishment to the Island of Elba. In Vienna, the Allies declared that they were only uniting against the one man; that they did not pretend to impose any particular master, or any sort of government on France. Alexander even asked the Congress for an alternative monarch to Louis XVIII. If the latter by hastening to seat himself in the Tuileries had not hastened to grab his throne, he might never have reigned. The treaties of 1815 were abominable, precisely because they refused to listen to the hereditary voice of the Legitimacy, and it was to destroy those treaties that I wished to build up our influence in Spain.

The only moment where one sees the spirit of the Restoration is at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle; the Allies had agreed to steal our provinces in the North and East: Monsieur de Richelieu intervened. The Tsar, moved by our misfortunes, prompted by his penchant for justice, handed over to Monsieur de Richelieu the map of France on which the fatal lines had been traced. I saw this map of the Styx with my own eyes, in the hands of Madame de Montcalm, sister of the noble negotiator.

How could France resist, occupied as it was, our strongholds garrisoned by foreigners? Once deprived of our military establishment, how long might we have groaned under the yoke of conquest? Had we had a sovereign from some other family, a chance Prince, no one would have respected him. Among the Allies, some yielded to the illusion of noble lineage, others believed that under a worn-out power the Kingdom would lose its energy and cease to be a source of trouble: Cobbet himself agreed, in his open letter. It is a monstrous ingratitude therefore not to see that, if we are still the Gaul that was, we owe it to the race we have abused the most. That race, whose blood circulated for eight centuries through France's very veins, blood which has made France what it is, has saved France too. Why be so obstinate as to continually deny the facts? They held our victory against us, as we held it against Europe. Our soldiers went to Russia: she sent our soldiers fleeing back along the tracks they had made. After action, reaction, that is the law. That does not diminish Napoleon's glory, a singular glory that remains entire; it does not diminish our national glory, covered with the dust of Europe, whose towers our banners have swept. It is useless, in otherwise justified vexation, to seek another cause than the true one for our ills. Far from being a cause, rather the Bourbons shared in our defeats.

Now appreciate the calumnies of which the Restoration has been the object; interrogate the archives of the Foreign Office, and you will be convinced of the independence of language employed towards foreign powers during the reigns of Louis XVIII and Charles X. Our sovereigns had a feeling for national dignity; they were kings above all to the foreigner, who frankly never desired the Restoration, and viewed the resurrection of the old monarchy only with regret. The diplomatic language of France at the epoch I am dealing with is, one must admit, individual and aristocratic; democracy, full of large and fecund virtues, is

nevertheless arrogant when it is in power: of incomparable munificence when immense devotion is required, it eschews detail; it is rarely noble, especially during lengthy misfortunes. That party born of hatred for the Legitimacy, established in the Courts of England and Austria, was due to the firmness of the Bourbon government.

Far from overthrowing that Legitimacy, we would have been better advised to shore up its ruins; sheltered by it we might have raised a new edifice, as one constructs a vessel to brave the ocean in a sheltered basin cut from the rock: so English liberty was created in the womb of Norman law. There was no need to repudiate the ghost of the monarchy; that centenarian of the Middle Ages, who like Dandolo, *certainly had eyes in his head, even if he could barely see*; an aged man who could command young crusaders and who, adorned with white hair, nevertheless printed vigorous and ineffaceable steps on the snow.

One conceives that given our long experience of fear, prejudice and shame-faced pride might blind us; but distant posterity will recognize that the Restoration has been, historically speaking, one of the happiest phases of our revolutionary cycle. Those parties whose flame has not yet died may cry for now: *'We were free under the Empire, slaves under the monarchy of the Charter!'* Future generations, not waylaid by that untruth, laughable if it were not a sophism, will say that the Bourbons prevented the dismemberment of France, founded representative government among us, made our finances prosper, redeemed debts they had not contracted, and even paid, religiously, a pension to Robespierre's sister. Finally, to replace our lost colonies, they left us, in Africa, one of the richest provinces of the Roman Empire.

Three things can be placed to the restored Legitimacy's account: it entered Cadiz; it gave Greece independence at Navarino; it freed Christianity by seizing Algiers: enterprises in which Bonaparte, Russia, the Emperor Charles V and Europe all failed. Show me a power of any duration (and one so disputed) which has accomplished such things.

I believe, hand on heart, that I have exaggerated nothing and have only displayed facts, in what I have just said concerning the Legitimacy. It is certain that the Bourbons neither wished to nor could re-establish a monarchy of the palace operating through a tribe of nobles and priests; it is certain that they were not imposed on us by the Allies; they were an accident of, not a cause of, our disasters, the cause of which evidently stemmed from Napoleon. But it is also true that the return of the third race (the Capetians) unfortunately coincided with the success of foreign arms. The Cossacks appeared in Paris at the very moment when Louis XVIII was again visible: thus to a humiliated France, private interests, and every sensitive feeling, the Restoration and the invasion were one and the same; the Bourbons became the victims of a confusion of events, of a slander changed, like so many others, into a half-truth. Alas! It is hard to escape the disasters that nature and time produce; you can fight against them manfully, but being in the right does not always guarantee victory. The Psylli, a tribe of ancient Africa, took up arms against the South Wind; a storm rose and swallowed these warriors: *'The Nasamonians'* says Herodotus, *'seized their abandoned lands.'*

In speaking of the final misfortune of the Bourbons, their beginnings come to mind: I do not know what prophecy of their tomb was heard beside their cradle. Henri IV no sooner found himself master of Paris than he was seized by a gloomy presentiment. The attempts at assassination which were repeated, without diminishing his courage, depressed his natural gaiety. In the procession of the Holy Spirit, on the 5th of January 1595, he appeared dressed in black, bearing a plaster on his upper lip covering the scar that Jean Châtel had made over his mouth while attempting to strike at his heart. He had a gloomy face;

Madame de Balagny asking him the cause, he replied: *‘How could I be happy viewing such an ungrateful people, who, though I always do and have done everything I can for them, and though I would sacrifice a thousand lives for their security if God had given me so many, are always making fresh attempts on me, for since I have been here I have been unable to attest to anything else?’*

Yet those very people cried: *‘Long live, the King!’* ‘Sire,’ said a lord of the court, *‘see how all your people rejoice to see you.’* Henri shook his head: *‘They are merely people. If my greatest enemy was where I am, and they saw him pass, they would do as much for him as for me and shout still more loudly.’*

A Leaguer, seeing the King sunk in the depths of his carriage, said: *‘He’s on the back of the cart already.’* Does it not seem to you that the Leaguer was describing Louis XVI travelling from the Temple to the scaffold?

On Friday the 14th of May 1610, the King, returning from Les Feuillants with Bassompierre and the Duc de Guise, said to them: *‘You do not know me yet, you gentlemen, but when you have lost me, then you will know my worth and the difference between me and other men.’* – ‘My God, Sire,’ replied Bassompierre, *‘will you never cease troubling us with talk of your imminent death?’* And then the Marshal reminded Henri of his glory, his prosperity, and the good health that prolonged his youth. ‘My friend,’ the King responded, *‘we must forget all that.’* Ravaillac was at the gates of the Louvre.

Bassompierre withdrew and only saw the King again in his room.

*‘He was lying there,’* he says, *‘on his bed; and Monsieur de Vic, sitting on the same bed, had placed his cross of the Order against his lips, and asked him to think of God. Monsieur le Grand (the Grand Écuyer) on arrival fell on his knees by the bedside and took the King’s hand which he kissed, and I flung myself at his feet which I embraced weeping bitterly.’*

Such is Bassompierre’s account.

Pursued by these sad memories, it seemed to me that I had seen the last Bourbons pass, *sad and melancholy*, through the vast rooms of the Hradschin, as the first Bourbon passed through the gallery of the Louvre; I had come to kiss the feet of dead royalty. Whether it has died forever or whether it will be reborn, it will own my last fealty: the day after its final dissolution, is the first day for me on which the Republic can commence. Should the *Fates*, who must edit my *Memoirs*, not publish them quickly, it will be seen, when they appear and are read and weighed, to what extent I am mistaken in my regrets and my conjectures. – Respecting misfortune, respecting what I have served and will continue to serve at the cost of my repose in my last days, I trace these lines, true or mistaken, across my falling hours, leaves, weightless and dry, that the breath of eternity will soon disperse.

If the noble lineages are approaching their end (a departure deriving from the possibilities for the future and the indestructible hopes that stir ceaselessly in men’s hearts) would it not be better for them to vanish in a finish worthy of their grandeur, into the darkness of the past along with the centuries? To prolong one’s days beyond the brightness of one’s renown is futile; the world grows weary of you and your noise; it wishes you to be as you once were forever: Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon have vanished in accord with the laws of fame. To die beautifully, one must die young; say not to the children of spring: *‘See! There is that genius; that person; that race the world applauded, for whose least hair, smile, glance one paid with one’s life!’* How sad it is see the aged Louis XIV finding no one to talk to of his century, other than the

old Duc de Villeroi! It was a last victory for the Great Condé on the edge of his grave to have encountered Bossuet: the orator stirred the silent waters of Chantilly; from the old man's dotage he re-shaped the adolescence of youth; he re-tinted the hair on the conqueror of Rocroi's brow, in bidding, he Bossuet, an immortal farewell to his white hair. You, who love glory, be mindful of your grave: sleep well there; try to cut a fine figure there, since there you will remain.

**End of Book XXXVII**

## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 1

Madame la Dauphine

The road from Prague to Carlsbad stretches through tedious plains stained with the blood of the Thirty Years' War. Travelling those battlefields at night, I humbled myself before the God of Armies, who bears the sky on his arm like a shield. From the distance one saw little wooded mountains with water at their feet. The witty medical men of Carlsbad liken the road to the serpent of Asclepius that, descending the hill, came to drink of Hygieia's goblet.

From the heights of the city tower, the *Stadturm*, a tower mitred with a steeple, the sentinels sound their trumpet as soon as they see a traveller. I was welcomed with a joyous peal as a dying man, and everyone along the valley cried with delight: '*Here comes an arthritic, a hypochondriac, a myope!*' Alas, I was better than that, I was an incurable.

At seven in the morning, on the 31st of May I was installed at the *Golden Ecu*, an inn run on behalf of the Count of Bolzano, a very noble but ruined gentleman. Lodging at this hotel were the Count and Countess of Cossé (who had preceded me) and my compatriot General de Trogoff, former Palace Governor at Saint-Cloud, born at Landivisiau, beneath the light of the Landernau moon: a stocky little man he was an Austrian grenadier captain in Prague during the Revolution. He came from visiting his exiled lord, a successor to Saint Clodoald, a monk in his time at Saint-Cloud. Trogoff, after his pilgrimage, returned to Lower Brittany. He took with him a Hungarian nightingale and a Bohemian nightingale which lamented Tereus' cruelty so much, they prevented everyone in the hotel from sleeping. Trogoff fed them on grated ox-heart, without succeeding in bringing an end to their grief.

*Et moestis late loca questibus implet:  
filling the place around with mournful cries.*

We embraced each other as Bretons do, Trogoff and I. The general, short and square like a Celt from La Cournaille was subtle beneath his apparent frankness, and an amusing story-teller. He was popular with Madame la Dauphine, and as he knew German, she took him along on her walks. Informed of my arrival by Madame de Cossé, she proposed I see her at nine-thirty or midday: at midday I was at her residence.

She occupied an isolated house, at the extremity of the town, on the right bank of the River Tepla, a little river which flows from the mountains and traverses the length of Carlsbad. Mounting the stairs to the Princess' apartment I was anxious: I was about to meet, for the first time, this perfect model of human suffering, this Antigone of Christianity. I had not had ten minutes speech with Madame la Dauphine in my life; during the time of her brief prosperity she had scarcely addressed two words to me; she always showed embarrassment towards me. Though I had never written to her or spoken about her other than with profound admiration, Madame la Dauphine necessarily nourished in regard to myself the prejudices of the ante-chamber set among whom she lived: the Royal Family vegetated in isolation in that citadel of foolishness and envy, which new generations besieged without being able to penetrate.

A servant opened the door to me: I saw Madame la Dauphine sitting on a sofa between two windows, in the depths of the room, embroidering a piece of tapestry by hand. I entered in such a state that I did not know if I could approach the Princess.

She raised her head, which had been bowed over her work as if to hide her own emotion, and addressing me said: *'I am happy to see you, Monsieur de Chateaubriand; the King informed me you would be arriving. You have spent the night here? You must be tired.'*

I respectfully presented Madame la Duchesse de Berry's letters; she took them, placed them on the settee beside her, and said: *'Sit down, sit down.'* Then she took up her embroidery again with a rapid, mechanical and convulsive movement.

I said nothing; Madame la Dauphine maintained her silence: there was the sound of the needle prick and the passage of the wool as the Princess tugged it through the canvas, on which I saw a few tears fall. The illustrious sufferer wiped them from her eyes with the back of her hand, and without raising her head, said: *'How is my sister? She is very unfortunate, very unfortunate. I am very sorry for her, very sorry.'* These brief repetitions sought in vain to initiate a conversation for which the two interlocutors lacked words. The Dauphine's eyes, reddened from constant weeping, gave her a beauty which matched that of the Spasimo Virgin.

*'Madame,'* I at last replied, *'Madame la Duchesse de Berry is indeed very unfortunate; she has charged me with coming to place her children under your protection during her imprisonment. It is a great relief to her in her trouble to think that Henri V has a second mother in Your Majesty.'*

Pascal was right to link the greatness with the wretchedness of mankind: who would have thought that Madame la Dauphine considered her titles of Queen and Majesty, which were so natural to her and whose vanity she knew, to be worth anything? Well, that word *Majesty* was still a magic word; it lightened the Princess' brow and dispelled the clouds for a moment; they soon returned there like a diadem.

*'Oh, no, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, no,'* the Princess said gazing at me and suspending her work, *'I am not Queen.'* – *'You are, Madame, you are according to the laws of the realm: Monseigneur le Dauphin could only abdicate because he was King. France regards you as its Queen, and you will be a mother to Henri V.'*

The Dauphine did not argue: that little weakness, by revealing the woman, obscured the splendor of hosts of other grandeurs, giving them a kind of charm, and bringing them nearer to the human condition.

I read, in a loud voice, my letter of accreditation, in which Madame la Duchesse de Berry explained about her marriage, ordered me to appear in Prague, asked to retain her title of French princess, and placed her children in her sister-in-law's care.

The princess had resumed her embroidery; after my speech she said: *'Madame la Duchesse de Berry is right to put her trust in me. That is fine, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, fine: tell my sister-in-law I am very sorry for her.'*

This insistence of Madame la Dauphine's on saying how sorry she was for Madame la Duchesse de Berry, while going no further, showed me how little sympathy there was, fundamentally, between those two spirits. It also seemed to me that an involuntary emotion had agitated that saintly heart. Rivalry in misfortune! Yet Marie-Antoinette's daughter had nothing to fear in that contest; the palm remained with her.

*'If Madame,' I replied, 'will read the letter Madame la Duchesse de Berry has written, and that addressed to her children, she will perhaps discover further clarification. I hope Madame will give me a letter to carry back to Blaye.'*

The letters were written in lemon-juice. *'I know nothing of this,'* said the Princess, *'how are we to proceed?'* I suggested a stove and some pieces of kindling; Madame rang the bell whose cord hung behind the sofa. A valet de chambre appeared, was given his orders, and set up the apparatus on the landing, outside the door of the room. Madame rose and we went to the stove. We set it on a little table by the staircase. I took one of the letters and held it parallel to the flames. Madame la Dauphine watched me and smiled because I had no success. She said: *'Here, give it to me, I will try.'* She passed the letter over the flame; Madame la Duchesse de Berry's large round hand appeared: the same was done for the second letter. I congratulated Madame on her success. A strange scene: the daughter of Louis XVI, at the top of a staircase in Carlsbad with me, deciphering mysterious characters sent by the prisoner of Blaye to the prisoner of the Temple!

We returned to our seat in the salon. The Dauphine read the letter addressed to her. Madame la Duchesse de Berry thanked her sister-in-law for the role she had adopted regarding her misfortune, recommended her children to her, and in particular placed her son under the guardianship of his virtuous aunt. The letter to the children consisted of a few tender words. The Duchesse de Berry charged Henri with making himself worthy of France.

Madame la Dauphine said: *'My sister-in-law does me justice, I have suffered with her. She has suffered greatly, greatly. Tell her I will take care of Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux. I love him dearly. How did he seem to you? His health is fine, is it not? He is strong, though somewhat nervous.'*

I spent two hours *tête-à-tête* with Madame, an honor rarely granted: she seemed content. Having known me only from hostile accounts, she had no doubt thought me a violent gentleman, swollen with a sense of my own importance; she was grateful to find me a human being and a decent man. She said, cordially: *'I am going out to take the waters; we dine at three, come if you are not in need of rest. I would like to see you there if it will not fatigue you too much.'*

I do not know to what I owed my success; but certainly the ice was broken, the obstacle removed; that gaze which had rested, in the Temple, on that of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, rested with kindness on a humble servant.

Nevertheless, though I had succeeded in setting the Dauphine at ease, I felt extremely constrained: the fear of exceeding certain limits robbed me even of the facility for those commonplaces I shared with Charles X. Whether I lacked the secret of how to extract whatever was sublime from Madame's soul; or whether the respect I felt closed the door on thoughtful communication, I experienced a distressing barrenness which emanated from myself.

At three, I went to Madame la Dauphine's. There I found Madame la Comtesse Esterhazy and her daughter, Madame d'Agoult, and Messieurs O'Hegerty the younger and de Trogoff; they had the honor of dining with the Princess. Countess Esterhazy, once beautiful, is still handsome: she had been friends with Monsieur le Duc de Blacas in Rome. It is said she involves herself in politics and taught Prince von Metternich all he knows. When Madame was sent to Vienna, on leaving the Temple, she met



Countess Esterhazy who became her companion. I noticed she listened attentively to my conversation; next day she had the naivety to say in front of me that she had spent the night writing. She was preparing to depart for Prague, a secret interview having been fixed at a location convenient to Monsieur de Blacas; from there, she went to Vienna. Old relationships rejuvenated by espionage! Such affairs and such pleasures! Mademoiselle Esterhazy is not pretty, and has a caustic and spiteful manner.

Vicomtesse d'Agoult, pious these days, is an important personage as one finds her in the sanctuaries of every princess. She promotes her family whenever she can, when speaking to everyone, particularly to me: I had the goodness to find positions for her nephews; she has as many as the late Arch-Chancellor Cambacérés.

The dinner was so poor and so meagre I left dying of hunger; it was served in Madame la Dauphine's drawing room, since she had no dining room. After the meal, we rose from the table; Madame went back to her sofa, and took up her embroidery, and we made a circle around her. Trogoff told stories, Madame enjoyed them. She was particularly interested in the female element. There was a question regarding the Duchess de Guiche: '*Plaits don't suit her*,' said the Dauphine, to my great astonishment.

From her sofa, Madame could see, through the window, what was happening outside: she named the passers-by male and female. Two little horses arrived with two riders dressed in tartan; Madame stopped work, gazed and said: '*It is Madame... (I forget the name) taking her children to the mountains.*' Marie-Thérèse curious, knowing the local gossip, the Princess of thrones and scaffolds descending from her heights to the level of other women, these things interested me singularly; I observed them with a kind of philosophic tenderness.

At five the Dauphine went out in her calash; at seven, I returned for the evening audience. The same establishment: Madame on the sofa, the dinner guests and half a dozen ladies young and old, partakers of the waters, added to the circle. The Dauphine made a touching but visible effort to be gracious; she had a word for all of us. She spoke to me several times, feigning to name me in order to make me known; but between each sentence she fell back into her distraction. Her needle multiplied its movements, her face drew nearer to her embroidery; I saw the Princess in profile and was struck by a sinister resemblance: Madame had the look of her father about her; when I saw her head bowed as beneath the sword of grief, I thought I saw that of Louis XVI waiting for the blade to fall.

At half past eight the evening audience ended; I went to bed overwhelmed by sleep and lassitude.

On Saturday, the 1st of June, I was up at five; at six I went to the Mühlenbad (Mill Baths): those taking the waters, male and female, crowded round the spring, walked beneath a gallery with wooden columns, or in the garden attached to the gallery, Madame la Dauphine arrived, dressed in a shabby robe of grey silk; round her shoulders hung a worn-out shawl and she had an old hat on her head. She looked as though she had patched her clothes together, like her mother in the Conciergerie. Monsieur O'Hegerty, her riding instructor, gave her his arm. She mingled with the crowd and presented her cup to the ladies who doled out the spring-water. No one paid any attention to Madame la Comtesse de Marne. Maria-Theresa, her grand-mother, had the Mill Baths rebuilt in 1762; she also sponsored the bell-towers in Carlsbad that were to summon her grand-daughter to the foot of the cross.

Madame having entered the garden, I advanced towards her: she seemed surprised with that courtier's attention. I rarely rose so early for royalty, except perhaps on the 14th of February 1820, when I went to seek the Duc de Berry at the Opera. The Princess allowed me half a dozen circuits of the garden at her side, talking pleasantly, and told me she would receive me at two o'clock, and would give me a letter. I left her, discreetly; I lunched hastily, and spent the remaining time walking in the valley.

## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 2

#### DIGRESSIONS: Springs – Mineral waters – History recalled

Carlsbad, 1st of June 1833.

As a Frenchman, I found only painful memories in Carlsbad. The town takes its name from Charles IV, King of Bohemia, who went there to be healed of his three wounds received at Creçy fighting next to his father Jan. Lobkowitz claims Jan was killed by a Scotsman; a circumstance unknown to historians.

*‘Sed cum Gallorum fines et amica tuetur  
Arva, Caledonia cuspide fossus obit.’*

*‘While he was defending the borders of Gaul and the fields of his allies, he died pierced by a Caledonian lance.’*

Did the poet add *Caledonia* to make up the quantity? In 1346, Edward III was at war with David II, and the Scots were allies of Philip VI.

The death of Jan the Blind of Bohemia at Crécy is one of the most heroic and moving moments in history. Jan wished to go to the aid of his son Charles; he said to his companions: ‘ “*My lords, you are my friends: I request you to lead me so far forward that I might land a blow with my sword,*” they replied that they would willingly do so...*The King of Bohemia rode forward, so as to land a blow with his sword, or four or more, and fought very vigorously as did those of his company; so far forward that he drove in among the English, and all remained there, and were found the next day in that place around their lord, and all their horses lying there together.*’

Few know that Jan of Bohemia’s heart was interred at Montargis, in the Dominican Church, and that the remains of a weathered inscription can be read on the tomb there: ‘*He died leading his men, commending them all to God the Father. Pray God for this sweet King.*’

May this memorial to a Frenchman make amends for French ingratitude, when in the days of our fresh disasters we appalled Heaven with our sacrilege, and hurled from his tomb a Prince who died for us in our former days of misfortune!

At Carlsbad the chronicles say that when Charles IV, King Jan’s son, was out hunting, one of his dogs chasing a deer fell from a hilltop into a pool of seething water. His barking brought the huntsmen running, and so the Sprudel spring was discovered. A pig scalded by the waters of Teplitz revealed them to a swineherd.

Such are the German legends. I have been to Corinth; the ruins of the Temple of Aphrodite and her sacred courtesans were scattered above Glycera’s ashes, but the Fountain of Pirene, born of a nymph’s tears, still flowed among the oleanders where the winged-horse Pegasus flew in the days of the Muses. The waves of a harbor empty of vessels bathed the fallen columns whose capitals were washed by the sea, like the heads of young drowned girls laid out on the sand; myrtle had grown through their hair and replaced the acanthus leaves; such are the legends of Greece.

There are eight springs in Carlsbad; the most famous is the *Sprudel*, discovered by the deer-hound. The spring emerges from the ground between the Church and the River Tepla with a hollow noise and white steam; it leaps in irregular spurts to a height of six or seven feet. The springs of Iceland alone are superior to the *Sprudel*, but no one goes to seek their health on the wilds of Hecla where life expires; where the summer's day, emerging from daylight, has neither sunset nor dawn; where the winter's night, re-born out of night, lacks daybreak or twilight.

The waters of the *Sprudel* will boil eggs and serve for cleaning tableware; this fine phenomenon has found employment on behalf of Carlsbad households: a symbol of genius degraded by lending its power to base tasks.

Monsieur Alexander Dumas has made a free translation of Lobkowitz's Latin ode on the *Sprudel*.

*Fons heliconiadum, etc.*

*'Fount sacred to the poet's rhyming feet,  
Where is the hearth that feeds your secret heat?  
Whence your burning bed of lime and sulphur?  
That flame whose vapors Etna lights no more,  
Does it forge unknown channels where you pour,  
As neighbor of the Styx, your seething water?'*

Carlsbad is the common rendezvous for sovereigns; they need to cure themselves of their crowns for their sake and ours.

They publish a daily list of visitors to the *Sprudel*: in the ancient records you can read the names of the greatest poets and literary men of the North, Gurowski, Traller, Dunker, Weisse, Herder, Goethe; I would have liked to find that of Schiller, the object of my preference. On the current page, among the host of obscure arrivals, can be seen the name of the Comtesse de Marne; it is only printed in small capitals.

In 1830, at the very moment of the royal family's exit from Saint-Cloud, Christophe's widow and daughters were taking the waters at Carlsbad. Their Haitian Majesties have settled in Tuscany near Their Napoleonic Majesties. King Christophe's youngest daughter, very well-educated and pretty, died at Pisa: free now, her ebony beauty rests beneath the porticos of the *Campo Santo*, far from the fields of sugar-cane and the mangroves in whose shade she was born a slave.

At Carlsbad, in 1826, there appeared an English lady from Calcutta, come from the fogs of the banyan-tree to the olives of Bohemia, from the Ganges' sun to that of the Tepla; she faded like a ray of Indian sunlight lost in the cold of night. The sight of cemeteries in places consecrated to health, is melancholy: there, young women sleep, strangers to one another: on their tombs are inscribed the length of their life, and the name of their country: it is as if one passed through a glass-house where flowers from every clime are cultivated, their names being written according to convention at the foot of each flower.

Indigenous law has come to anticipate the needs of death abroad; foreseeing the decease of travellers far from their own land, it permits later exhumation. So I could rest in the cemetery of St. Andrew for a dozen years and nothing would hinder the testamentary arrangements regarding these *Memoirs*. If Madam

la Dauphine died here, would French law permit the return of her remains? That would be a delicate point of controversy among the professors of doctrine and the casuists of proscription.

The waters of Carlsbad are, they say, good for the liver and bad for the teeth. As to the liver, I would not know; but there are plenty of toothless people in Carlsbad; the years perhaps rather than the waters are responsible for the fact: time is a false insignia and a great puller of teeth.

Does it not seem to you as if I were setting out again to write *the masterpiece of an unknown*? One thing leads me to another; I travel from Iceland to the Indies.

*‘There are the Apennines and here are the Caucasus.’*

And yet I have not yet left the valley of the Tepla.

## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 3

#### MORE DIGRESSIONS: The Valley of the Tepla – Its Flora

In order to view the Tepla Valley at a glance, I climbed a hill, through a pinewood: the perpendicular columns of these trees formed an acute angle with the sloping ground; some showed their crowns, two-thirds, half, or a quarter of their trunk where others placed their roots.

I will always love woods: the Flora of Carlsbad, whose breath had embroidered the grass beneath my feet, seemed delightful to me; I found fingered sedge (*carex digitata*), deadly nightshade (*atropa belladonna*), common purple loosestrife (*lythrum salicaria*), St. John's wort (*hypericum perforatum*), hardy lily of the valley (*convallaria majalis*) and grey willow (*salix cinerea*): sweet subjects of my first herbals.

Behold my youth that comes hanging its memories from the stems of those plants I recognized in passing. Do you remember my botanical studies among the Seminoles, the evening-primroses (*oenotheras*), the water-lilies (*nymphaeas*) among whom I set my Floridian girls, the garlands of clematis they twined round some terrapin, our slumber on the island by the lake-shore, the rain of magnolia petals which fell on our heads? I dare not calculate how old my fickle *painted lady* would be now; what would I gather today from her brow: the wrinkles that cover mine? No doubt she sleeps eternally among the roots of a cypress grove in Alabama; and I who hold these distant, solitary, unknown memories in my mind, I live! I am in Bohemia, not with Atala and Céluta, but with Madame la Dauphine who will give me a letter for Madame la Duchesse de Berry.

## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 4

#### A last conversation with the Dauphine – Departure

At one o'clock, I was at Madame la Dauphine's disposal.

*'You wish to leave today, Monsieur de Chateaubriand?'*

*'– If Your Majesty will allow me: I will endeavor to see Madame de Berry again in France; otherwise I would be obliged to make a voyage to Sicily, and Her Royal Highness would be deprived for too long of the reply she awaits.'*

*'– Here is a message for her. I have avoided mentioning your name in order not to compromise you in case of eventualities. Read it.'*

I read the note; it was wholly in Madame la Dauphine's hand: I have copied it exactly.

*'Carlsbad, this 31st of May 1833.'*

*'I have experienced real satisfaction, my dear sister, in at last receiving news of you directly. I am sorry for you with all my soul. Depend always upon my constant interest in you and above all in your dear children, who are more precious than ever to me. My existence, as long as I live, will be dedicated to them. I have not yet been able to execute your commissions to our family, my health requiring that I come here to take the waters. But I will acquit myself of them as soon as I return among them, and please believe that we, they and I, will always share the same feelings about everything.'*

*Adieu, my dear sister, I am sorry for you from the depths of my heart, and embrace you tenderly.*

*M-T'*

I was struck by the reticence in this note: certain vague expressions of attachment barely concealed the deeper coolness. I made a respectful comment, and again pleaded the cause of the unfortunate prisoner. Madame replied that the King would decide. She promised me to interest herself in her sister-in-law; but there was scant cordiality in the Dauphine's voice and manner; rather one sensed an inner irritation. The game seemed lost as far as my client was concerned. I fell back on Henri V. I thought I owed the Princess the sincerity which I had always employed at my peril in order to enlighten the Bourbons; I spoke to her without flattery or circumlocution regarding the education of Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux. *'I know Madame has read with sympathy the pamphlet at the end of which I express various ideas concerning Henri V's education. I fear lest the child's surroundings are harmful to him: Messieurs de Damas, de Blacas and Latil are not popular.'*

Madame acknowledged it; she even denied Monsieur de Damas suddenly, while saying a few words in honor of his courage, probity and religiosity.

*'In September Henri V will be of age: do you not think it would be helpful to form a council round him into which might be introduced those men against whom France raises least objection?'*

*‘– Monsieur de Chateaubriand, by multiplying counsellors one multiplies the sources of advice; and then who would you propose that the King choose?’*

*‘– Monsieur de Villèle.’*

Madame, who was embroidering, arrested her needle, looked at me in astonishment, and astonished me in turn by uttering a judicious critique of the character and intellect of Monsieur de Villèle. She did not consider him an effective administrator.

*‘Madame is too harsh,’ I said: ‘Monsieur de Villèle is a man of order, conciliation, moderation, and calm whose resources are endless; though he lacked the ambition to occupy the place of Premier, for which he was unacceptable, he is a Minister to retain indefinitely in the King’s council; he is irreplaceable. His presence beside Henri V would have the greatest effect.’*

*‘– I thought you disliked Monsieur de Villèle?’*

*‘– I would despise myself if, after the fall of the monarchy, I continued to nourish some feeling of petty rivalry. Our royalist divisions have already done enough harm; I abjure them with all my heart and am ready to ask pardon of those who have offended me. I beg Your Majesty to believe that it is neither a false display of generosity, nor a marker laid down in anticipation of future fortune. What have I to expect from Charles X in exile? If a Restoration is to occur, shall I not be in the depths of my grave?’*

Madame looked at me affably; she had the goodness to praise me for those few words: *‘Very fine, Monsieur de Chateaubriand!’* She seemed perpetually surprised to find a Chateaubriand so different to how he had been painted.

*‘– There is someone else, Madame, whom you could call on,’ I continued: ‘my noble friend, Monsieur Lainé. We are three men who ought never to swear loyalty to Philippe: I, Monsieur Lainé, and Monsieur Royer-Collard. Outside the government, and in diverse roles, we might have formed a triumvirate of some value. Monsieur Lainé took the oath through frailty, Monsieur Royer-Collard through pride; the first died of his frailty; the second lives by his pride, since he stands by what he has done, being unable to do anything which is not admirable.’*

*‘– You are satisfied with Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux?’*

*‘– I found him delightful. They say Your Majesty spoils him a little.’*

*‘– Oh: not so! His health, are you satisfied with that?’*

*‘– He seems wonderfully well; he is delicate and a little pale.’*

*‘– His complexion often varies; but he is of a nervous disposition. Monsieur le Dauphin is highly esteemed in the army, is he not? Highly esteemed? They remember him, do they not?’*

This brusque question, without connection with what we had been saying, revealed a secret wound that the days of Saint-Cloud and Rambouillet had left in the Dauphine’s heart. She brought up her husband’s name to reassure herself; I hastened to anticipate the thoughts of the Princess and the wife; I affirmed, rightly, that the army would always remember his impartiality, virtues and courage as a General.



Seeing that the hour for her walk was nearing:

‘– *Has Your Majesty any orders to give me? I fear to seem importunate.*’

‘– *Tell your friends how I love France; that they know I am truly French. I charge you particularly with saying that; you will give me pleasure in saying it: I truly regret France, I regret France deeply.*’

‘– *Ah, Madame, what has that same France not done to you: you who suffered so greatly, how can you still feel homesick for her?*’

‘– *No, no, Monsieur de Chateaubriand, do not forget; tell everyone that I am French, that I am French.*’

Madame left me; I was obliged to halt on the stairs before leaving; I would have not dared show myself in the street; my tears still wet my eyes in recalling that scene.

Returning to my inn, I changed into my travelling clothes. While they were getting the carriage ready, Trogoff chattered away. He told me again that the Dauphine was very satisfied with me, that she did not hide it, and that she told anyone who wished to hear: ‘*Your trip here has been very important!*’ Trogoff cried, trying to drown the singing of his two nightingales, ‘*You will see a result from it all!*’ I had no belief it would have any result.

I was right; that very evening Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux was expected. Even though everyone knew of his arrival, they made a mystery of it. I took care to show I myself knew of the secret.

At six in the evening, I set off for Paris. However immense the misfortune of Prague, the pettiness of a Prince’s life reduced to that alone is hard to swallow; to drink it to the last drop, he only needed to burn down the Palace and be drunk on ardent faith. – Alas! A modern Symmachus, I wept the desertion of the altars; I raise my hands towards the Capitol; I invoke the majesty of Rome! But what if the god has turned to wood and Rome can no longer be rekindled from the dust?

## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 5

#### JOURNAL FROM CARLSBAD TO PARIS: Cynthia – Eger – Wallenstein

The road from Carlsbad as far as Ellbogen, along the Eger, is pleasant. The castle above this little town is twelfth century and is sited like a sentinel on a rock, at the entrance to a valley gorge. The foot of the rock, covered with trees, is contained in a bend of the Eger; from that fact the town and Castle take their name, Ellbogen (elbow). The keep was lit by the last rays of the sun when I saw it from the highroad. Above the mountains and the woods, there hung a twisted column of smoke from a foundry.

I left the relay post at Zwoda at nine-thirty. I followed the road along which Vauvenargues passed during the retreat from Prague; that young man to whom Voltaire, in the funeral oration for the officers who died in 1741, addressed these words: *'You are no more, O sweet hope of my last days; I have always seen you as the most unfortunate of men, and the most tranquil.'*

From the depths of my calash, I watched the stars rise.

*'Do not fear, Cynthia; it is only the susurrations of the reeds bent by our passage through their motionless forest. I have a knife for the jealous, and courage to defend you. Let not this tomb cause you terror; it is that of a woman once loved as you: Cecilia Metella rests here.'*

*How fine this night in the Roman Campagna! The moon rises behind the Sabine Hills to gaze at the sea; she causes the ash-blue summits of Albano, and the more distant and less deeply engraved outlines of Soracte, to emerge from the diaphanous shadows. The long line of ancient aqueducts allows a few drops of moisture to seep over the moss, the columbines, the wallflowers, and joins the mountains to the city walls. Set one above another, the aerial arches cut across the sky, sending the torrent of ages and the courses of rivers along the breeze. Law-giver to the world, Rome, set on the rock of her sepulchre, in her robe of the centuries, projects the broken form of her vast design onto the milky solitude.*

*Let us sit here: this pine-tree, like a goat-herd of Abruzzo, deploys its umbrella among the ruins. The moon lets fall its light like snow over the Gothic crown of the tower of Metella's tomb and over the festoons of marble linked to the horns of the bucrania; elegant pomp inviting us to enjoy life as it passes.*

*Listen! The nymph Egeria sings beside her fount; the nightingale is heard in the vine beside the Scipios' hypogeia; the languishing breeze of Syria brings us, indolently, the perfume of wild tuberoses. The villa's palm-tree sways half-drowned in the amethyst and azure of Phoebe's brightness. But you, pale with the reflected whiteness of Diana, O Cynthia, you are a thousand times more graceful than the palm. The shades of Delia, Lalage, Lydia, Lesbia and Olympia, perched on the broken cornices around you, babble mysterious words. Your glances intersect those of the stars and mingle with their rays.*

*But there is no reality, Cynthia, in the happiness you enjoy. Those constellations so bright above you are only in harmony with your delight by the illusions of false perspective. Girl of Italy, time flies! Your companions have already passed over this carpet of flowers.*

*A mist unwinds, ascends and forms a silvery retina for the eye of night; a pelican cries and returns to the shore; a woodcock plunges among the horsetails of diamantine founts; the bell of St.*

*Peter's echoes from the cupola; nocturnal plain-song, voice of the Middle Ages, deepens the melancholy of the isolated monastery of Holy Cross; a monk kneels and recites Lauds, among the calcified pillars of St Paul's; vestals prostrate themselves on the icy slabs that pave their crypts; the fife-player whistles his midnight plaint before the solitary Madonna, at the sealed door of a catacomb. Hour of sadness, when religion wakes and love sleeps!*

*Cynthia your voice is weakening: it dies on your lips, that refrain the Neapolitan fisherman brought you in his boat skimming the waves, or the Venetian oarsman in his light gondola. Go to the absences of your repose; I will protect your sleep. The night whose lids cover your eyes subtly disputes with that which Italy, slumbering and perfumed, pours on your brow. When the whinnying of our horses is heard in the Campagna, when the morning star proclaims the dawn, the goat-herd of Frascati will descend, and I will cease to lull you with my song's murmuring sigh:*

*"A fascicle of jasmine and narcissi, an alabaster Hebe, not long arisen from the recesses of an excavation, or fallen from the pediment of a temple, lies on that bed of anemones: no Muse, you are wrong. That jasmine, that alabaster Hebe, is a sorceress of Rome, born six months ago, of May and the latter days of spring, to the sound of the lyre, at the break of dawn, in a rose-field of Paestum.*

*Wind from the orange-groves of Palermo that sighs around Circe's isle; breeze that passes over Tasso's tomb, that caresses the nymphs and cupids of the Farnesina; you who play among the Raphael Virgins of the Vatican, among the statues of the Muses, you who dip your wings in the little cascades of Tivoli; genii of the arts who thrive on masterpieces and flutter among memories, come: you alone I will permit to breathe Cynthia's slumber.*

*And you, majestic daughters of Pythagoras, you Fates in your linen robes, fatal sisters seated beside the axis of the spheres, turn the thread of Cynthia's destiny on golden spindles; make them descend from your fingers and rise again to your hands in ineffable harmony; immortal weavers, open the ivory gate to those dreams that rest on a woman's breast without oppressing it. I will sing of you, O canephorus of the Roman rites, young Charite fed on ambrosia in Venus' lap, smile sent from the East to glide across my life; forgotten violet in the garden of Horace..."*

*'Mein Herr? Ten kreutzers for the toll (dix kreutzers bour la parrière)'*

*A plague on your crutches! I was in another place! I was so in flight! The Muse will not return! That cursed Eger, at which we are arriving, is the cause of my unhappiness.*

*The nights are fatal in Eger. Schiller shows us Wallenstein betrayed by his accomplices, advancing towards the window in a room of the fortress of Eger: 'The sky is stormy and disturbed,' he says; 'the wind toys with the banner on the tower; clouds are flying across the crescent moon that illuminates the night with a flickering and uncertain glow.'*

*Wallenstein, at the moment of his assassination, is moved by the death of Max Piccolomini, loved by Thekla: 'The flower of my life has vanished; he was dear to me like an image of my youth. He changed reality for me to a beautiful dream.'*

Wallenstein withdraws to his place of repose: *'Night advances; there is no sound of movement in the castle: let us go, light the way; take care not to wake me too late; I think I will sleep deeply, after the day's harsh deeds.'*

The murderers' knives snatch Wallenstein from his dreams of ambition, as the voice of the gatekeeper put an end to my dream of love. And Schiller, and Benjamin Constant (who showed fresh talent in imitating the German play), have gone to join Wallenstein, while I recall their triple fame at the gates of Eger.

## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 6

Weissenstadt – The lady traveller – Berneck and memories – Bayreuth – Voltaire – Hollfeld – A church –  
The little basket-carrier – The innkeeper and his servant

*1st of June 1833.*

I pass through Eger and on Saturday the 1st of June, at daybreak, I enter Bavaria: a tall red-headed girl, bare-footed and bare-headed, comes to open the gate, as if she were Austria in person. The cold persists; the grass in the ditches is coated with white frost; bedraggled foxes emerge from the oat-fields; outspread jagged grey clouds cut across the sky like eagles' wings.

I arrived at Weissenstadt at nine in the morning; at the same moment, a kind of hired wagon arrived carrying a young lady with stylish hair; she had the look of what she probably was: a creature destined for pleasure, a brief tale of love, then the hospital and a common grave. Errant joys, may Heaven be not too harsh with your theatricals! There are so many actors worse than you in this world.

Before penetrating the village, I crossed the *wastes*: the word finds itself at the tip of my pencil; it belongs to our ancient Frankish language: it provides a better description of desolate countryside than the word *lande*, which means *moor*.

I still remember the song they sing in the evening crossing the moors:

*It was the Knight of Landes:  
The Knight of Misfortune!  
When he was in the 'lande',  
To hear the bells give tune!*

After Weissenstadt comes Berneck. Leaving Berneck, the road is bordered by poplars, whose winding avenue inspired in me a feeling of pleasure and sadness combined. Searching my memory, I found they resembled the poplars with which the highroad was once lined on entering Villeneuve-Sur-Yonne from Paris. Madame de Beaumont is no more; Monsieur Joubert is no more; the poplars are felled, and, after the fall of the monarchy for the fourth time I am passing the poplars of Berneck on foot: 'Give me,' says Saint Augustine, 'a man who loves, and he will understand what I say.'

The young lady laughs at her errors; she is charming, joyous; you may announce in vain that moment when she will sink as deeply into bitterness; she will shock you with her flightiness, and wing her way towards her pleasures: she is right, so long as she dies along with them.

Here is Bayreuth, a memory of another kind. The town is situated in the midst of a plain with mixed cultivation of grass and cereals: the streets are wide, the houses low, the population light. At the time of Voltaire and Frederick II, the Margravine of Bayreuth was celebrated: her death inspired the poet of Ferney to write the only ode in which he shows any lyric ability:

*'You will sing no longer, lonely Sylvander,  
In the Palace of Art where the sound of your word*

*Dared to speak against prejudice, and sang there,  
Allowing Humanity's rights to be heard.'*

The poet would be right in praising himself, if it were not that no one in the world was less solitary than Voltaire-Sylvander. The poet adds, addressing the Margravine:

*'From philosophy's tranquil heights your pity,  
Looked down on the world with eyes serene,  
The vanishing phantoms of lifelong reverie,  
So many vain ideas, so many ruined dreams.'*

From the heights of the Palace, it is easy to look down with eyes serene on the poor devils passing by in the street, but those lines are no less powerful in meaning...Who feels that more than I? I have seen so many phantoms during my lifelong reverie! At this very moment have I not been contemplating the three royal shades in the Palace of Prague and the daughter of Marie-Antoinette in Carlsbad? In 1733, just a century ago, what did people occupy their minds with? Had they the least idea of what would be happening now? When Frederick was married in 1733, under the harsh eye of his father, had he seen, in his almanac, in his copy of 'Matthieu Laensberg', Monsieur de Tournon the Treasurer of Bayreuth quitting his treasury for the *Prefecture of Rome*? In 1933, a traveller passing through Franconia will demand of my shade if I divined the events which he will witness.

While I was lunching, I read the lessons that a German lady, of necessity young and pretty, wrote down from her teacher's dictation:

*'The one he is happy, is rich. You and me have little money; but we is happy. We are thus to my mind richer than those who has a ton of gold, and he.'*

It is true, mademoiselle, *you* and *me* have little money; you are happy, so it appears, and scorn a ton of gold; but if by chance I was not happy, then you might agree that a ton of gold might be very acceptable to me.

Leaving Bayreuth, one ascends. Slender trimmed pine-trees recall the pillars of the Cairo mosque, or the Cathedral of Cordoba, but darkened and truncated, like a landscape reproduced in a *camera obscura*. The road continues from hill to hill and valley to valley; the hills broad with a tuft of trees on their brows, the valleys narrow and green, but with few streams. At the lowest point of each valley, you find a hamlet marked by the steeple of a little church. All Christian civilization is created in this way: the missionary, who has become a priest, halts; the Barbarians camp around him, like a flock gathering round its shepherd. Once these out of the way places would have made me dream more than one kind of dream; today, I dream of nothing and am happy nowhere.

Baptiste, suffering from an excess of fatigue forced me to stop at Hollfeld. While supper was being prepared, I climbed a rock which overlooks part of the village. On this rock stands a square belfry; martins called as they skimmed the roof and sides of the tower. Since my childhood at Combours, that scene composed of a few birds and an old tower had not recurred; I felt my heart compress. I descended to the church over ground sloping to the west; it was encircled by its cemetery devoid of recent burials. Only the ancient dead have traced their furrows there; proof that they worked the fields. The setting sun, pale and smothered by a fir grove on the horizon, lit the solitary sanctuary where no one stood but me.

When will I lie down in turn? Beings of nothingness and shadow, our powerlessness and our power are deeply characteristic of us: we cannot procure light and life for ourselves at will; but nature, in giving us eyelids and hands, has put night and death at our disposal.

Entering the church whose portal was ajar, I knelt with the intention of saying a *Pater* and an *Ave* for the repose of my mother's soul; immortal duties imposed on Christian souls in their mutual tenderness. There, I thought I heard the door of a confessional open; I imagined that the dead, instead of a priest, would appear at the penitent's grill. At that very moment the bell-ringer was about to close the church door, I only had time enough to leave.

Returning to the inn, I met a little girl carrying a basket on her back: she had bare feet and legs; her dress was short, her blouse torn; she walked with bowed back and folded arms. We climbed a steep street together; she turned her sunburnt face towards me a little; her pretty tousled hair stuck to her basket behind. Her eyes were black; her mouth was half-open to allow her to breathe: you could see that, beneath her burdened shoulders, her young breast had known nothing but the weight of the orchards' harvest. She made one wish to speak to her of roses: *Ρόδα μ' εἶρηκας* (Aristophanes).

I set to drawing up the horoscope of the adolescent fruit-picker: will she grow old at the cider-press, the mother of an obscure but happy family? Will she be led off to the camps by some corporal? Will she fall prey to some Don Juan? The seduced village girl loves her ravisher as well as the astonishment of love; he transports her to a palace of marble on the Straits of Messina, beneath a palm-tree beside a fountain, facing the sea with azure wave, and Etna spouting flame.

I was at this point in my thought, when my companion, turning to the left in a large square, headed towards some isolated habitations. At the moment of vanishing, she stopped; she cast a last glance at the stranger; then, lowering her head to allow herself and her basket to pass beneath a low doorway, she entered a cottage, like a little wild cat slipping into a barn among the sheaves. Let us return to Her Royal Highness Madame la Duchesse de Berry in her prison.

*'I followed her, but grieved also  
At having none but her to follow.'*

My host at Hollfeld is a singular man; he and his serving-woman are innkeepers as a last resort; they have a horror of travellers. When they see a carriage in the distance, they go and hide while cursing these vagabonds who have nothing to do but travel the highroads, these idlers who disturb an honest tavern-keeper and stop him drinking the wine he is forced to sell them. The old woman perceives that her master will ruin himself; but she awaits a gift of Providence on his behalf; like Sancho she says: '*Monsieur, accept this fine kingdom of Micomicon that falls from the sky into your hand.*'

Once the initial bout of moodiness has passed, the couple, half-tipsy, are fine. The servant speaks a little broken French, stares fiercely at you, and has the air of saying: '*I have seen better gallants like you in Napoleon's army!*' She had known the pipe and brandy as well as the glory of the camps; she ogled me malignly and with irritation: how sweet it is to be loved at the very moment when one has lost all expectation of being so! But, Javotte, you arrive too late on the scene of *my bruised and shattered hopes*, as an old French writer has it; my sentence has been pronounced: '*Harmonious old man, take your rest,*' Monsieur Lerminier tells me. You see, kindly stranger, I am forbidden from listening to your song:

*'Purveyor to the Regiment,  
Javotte is my name.  
I sell, I give, and gaily drink  
My brandy and my wine.'  
Nimble feet, looks that win,  
Tin tin, tin tin, tin tin, tin tin  
R'lin tin tin.*

That is why I refuse to be seduced by you; you are thoughtless; you will betray me. Away with you then, Javotte of Bavaria, like your predecessor Madame Isabeau.



## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 7

Bamberg – A hunchback – Würzburg – Its Canons – A drunken man – The swallow

2nd of June 1833.

Leaving Hollfeld, I passed through Bamberg at night. Everyone was asleep; I only saw one little light whose feeble gleam shone from the depths of a room dimmed by the window. What was awake there: pleasure or pain; love or death?

At Bamberg in 1815, Berthier Prince of Neuchâtel fell from a balcony into the street: his master was to fall from a greater height.

Sunday, the 2nd of June.

At Dettelbach, the vineyards reappear. Four kinds of vegetation mark the boundaries of four habitats and four climates; silver birch, vines, olive-trees and palm-trees, progressing ever sunwards.

Beyond Dettelbach, two relay posts before Würzburg a female hunchback seated herself at the back of my carriage; she was the *Girl from Andros* of Terence: *Inopia...egregia forma, aetate integra: Poor...of surpassing beauty, in the flower of youth*. The coachman wanted her to descend; I opposed this for two reasons: firstly because I feared the witch might cast a spell on me: secondly because having read in a biography of me that I was a hunchback myself, all female hunchbacks are my sisters. Who can reassure you that you are not a hunchback? Who will refrain from ever telling you that you are one? If you look at yourself in a mirror, you see nothing; does one ever see what one is? You will find your waist measurement suits you marvelously. All hunchbacks are proud and happy; popular songs swear to the advantages of a hunched back. At the entrance to a track, my lady hunchback, adjusting herself, set foot to earth majestically: charged with her burden, like all mortals, Serpentine pushed her way into a cornfield, and disappeared among ears of wheat taller than she.

At noon on the 2nd of June, I reached the summit of a hill from which Würzburg was revealed. The castle is on a height, the town below, with its palace, steeples and turrets. The palace, though solid, would be fine even in Florence; in case of rain, the Prince could shelter all his subjects in his château, without having to use his own apartments.

The Bishop of Würzburg was once sovereign over the nominations for canons of the chapter. After his election, he passed, nude to the waist, between his confreres ranged in two files; they whipped him. One would expect that Princes, shocked by this method of consecrating the royal back, would refuse to join the ranks. Today they would not succeed: there is no descendant of Charlemagne who would accept being whipped for three days in order to obtain the crown of Yvetot.

I have met the Emperor of Austria's brother, the Duke of Würzburg; he sang very agreeably in Francis I's gallery at Fontainebleau, at the Empress Josephine's concerts.

Schwartz was detained for two hours at the passport bureau. Left, with my horseless vehicle, in front of a church, I entered: I prayed with the Christian congregation, who represent the old society in the new. A

procession left to make a circuit of the church; if only I were a monk in the ruins of Rome! The age to which I belong will end with me.

When the first seeds of religion germinated in my soul, I bloomed, as virgin earth, freed from its brambles, bears its first crops. A cold and arid North Wind rises and the ground is parched. The sky takes pity on it; it grants its cool dew; then the North Wind blows again. That alternation of doubt and faith has long made my life a mixture of despair and ineffable joy. My good and saintly mother, pray to Jesus Christ for me: more than other men your son needs redemption.

I left Würzburg at four and took the road to Mannheim. Entering the Duchy of Baden, through a village which was in the midst of celebrations, a drunken man grasped my hand shouting: ‘*Long live, the Emperor!*’ Everything that has happened since the Fall of Napoleon has not occurred as far as Germany is concerned. Those men, who rose to snatch their national independence courtesy of Bonaparte’s ambition, dream only of him, he has so seized the imagination of nations, from the Bedouin in their tents to the Teutons in their huts.

The nearer I came to France, the noisier the children in the villages became, the faster the coachmen drove: life was reborn.

At Bischofsheim, where I dined, a pretty curiosity appeared at my grand repast: a swallow, truly Procne with her reddened throat, she came to perch at my open window, on the iron bracket that supported the sign of the *Golden Sun*; then she uttered the sweetest song in the world, regarding me with a look of recognition and without showing the least fear. I am never sorry to be woken by the daughter of Pandion; I have never called her a *babbler* as Anacreon does; I have always, on the contrary, welcomed her return with the children’s song from the Isle of Rhodes: ‘*She comes, she comes, the swallow comes, bringing fine weather and lovely days! Open your doors, never scorn her, the swallow.*’

‘François,’ said my table-guest in Bischofsheim, ‘my great-great-grandmother lived at Combours, beneath the eaves of the tower roof; you kept her company every autumn, in the reeds by the lake, when you dreamed at evening with your sylph. She flew around your native cliffs the very day you embarked for America and sometimes followed your sail. My grand-mother nested above Charlotte’s window; eight years later she arrived with you in Jaffa; you commented on her in your Itinerary. My mother, singing to the dawn, once fell down the chimney in your room at the Foreign Office; you opened the window for her. My mother had several children; I who am speaking to you, am from her last brood; I have already met you on the ancient Tivoli road in the Roman countryside; do you remember? My feathers were so dark and lustrous! You are looking at me sadly. Do you want us to fly away together?’

– ‘Alas, dear swallow, who could know my story better than you, you are extremely kind; but I am a poor bird in moult, and my feathers will not renew; so I cannot fly with you. Too weighed down by sorrows and years, it would be impossible for you to carry me. And then, where would we go? Spring and fair climes are no longer my season. Love and the air are yours, earth and loneliness mine. You are going; may the dew refresh your wings! May a hospitable spar offer itself to your weary flight, as you cross the Ionian Sea! May a serene October save you from disaster! Greet the olive-trees of Athens and the palm-trees of Rosetta for me. If I am no more when the flowers recall you, I invite you to my funeral feast: come at sunset to snatch flies from the grass by my tomb; like you, I have loved liberty, and I have lived awhile.’

## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 8

The inn at Wiesenbach – A German and his wife – My old age – Heidelberg –  
Pilgrims – Ruins -Mannheim

*3rd and 4th of June 1833.*

I myself was on my way overland a little after the swallow had appeared. The night was cloudy; the moon swam, dim and waning, among the clouds; my eyes, half-shut, closed while gazing at her; I felt as though I was expiring in the mysterious light which illuminates the shades: *'I experienced a quiet despondency, precursor of the last repose.'* (Manzoni)

I stopped at Wiesenbach: a solitary inn, in a narrow cultivated valley between two wooded hills. A German from Brunswick, a traveller like myself, hearing my name pronounced, approached me. He grasped my hand, and spoke to me about my works; his wife, he said, learnt to read French by studying Le Génie du Christianisme. He commented endlessly on my astonishing youthfulness. *'But,'* he added, *'my judgement is at fault; from your recent works I ought to have believed you to be as young as you appear there.'*

My life has been involved with so many events that I possess, in my readers' minds, the antiquity of those same events. I often talk about my grey hair: a calculated move on the part of my self-esteem, so that on seeing me people cry: *'Oh, he is not so very old!'* People are comfortable with their white hair: they can boast of it; to glorify oneself for having black hair would be in very bad taste: a great subject for a triumph to be as your mother made you! But to have the look of the age, misfortune and wisdom you have acquired, that is fine! My little ruse sometimes succeeded. Lately a priest expressed the desire to meet me; he remained silent on seeing me; at last recovering his speech, he cried: *'Oh, my dear sir, you will battle for the faith for ages yet!'*

One day, passing through Lyons, a lady wrote to me; she begged me to grant a place in my carriage to her daughter and escort her to Paris. The proposition seemed unusual to me; but finally, having verified the signature, the unknown turned out to be a highly respectable lady; I replied politely. The mother presented herself with her daughter, a divinity of sixteen. The mother had no sooner set eyes on me than she blushed scarlet; her confidence fled: *'Pardon me, Monsieur,'* she said to me stammering: *'I am no less filled with esteem...But you understand the situation...I am at fault...I am so surprised...'* I insisted on gazing at my future companion, who seemed to be amused by the conversation; I protested profusely that I would take the greatest care imaginable of that lovely young person; the mother vanished in a wave of excuses and curtsies. The two ladies withdrew. I was proud to have given them so much to fear. For several hours, I thought myself rejuvenated by Aurora. The lady had imagined that the author of Le Génie du Christianisme, was some old Abbé Chateaubriand, an aged gentleman tall and dry, incessantly taking snuff from an enormous tin snuff-box, who could certainly be entrusted with escorting an innocent schoolgirl to the convent of Sacré-Coeur.

At Vienna, ten or fifteen years ago, they said that I lived quite alone in a certain valley called the Vallée-aux-Loups. My house was built on an island: when anyone wished to see me, they had to sound a horn from the opposite bank of the river (the river at Châtenay!) Then, I inspected them through a hole: if the company pleased me (which was hardly ever the case), I came to collect them myself in a little boat; if

not I did not. In the evenings, I beached my canoe and no one could reach my island. Indeed, I should have lived like that; that story from Vienna has always delighted me: Prince von Metternich certainly did not invent it; he is too much my friend to have done so.

I have no idea what the German traveller might have said about me to his wife, or whether he would have hastened to disabuse her of my dilapidation. I fear the disadvantages of possessing dark hair and white hair, and of being neither young nor a sage. Moreover, I was scarcely in the mood for coquetry in Wiesenbach; a gloomy northerly moaned beneath the doors and through the corridors of the hostelry: when the wind blows, I am no more amorous than it.

From Wiesenbach to Heidelberg, you follow the course of the Neckar, bordered by steep hills, which bear forest on shoals of sand and red sulphate. What rivers I have seen! I encountered pilgrims from Waldthurn: they formed parallel lines on both sides of the main road: vehicles passed through their midst. The women walked barefoot, rosary in hand, a bundle of linen on their heads; the men bare-headed, also rosary in hand. It was raining; in several places watery clouds crawled across the hill slopes. Boatloads of wood floated downriver, others ascended, under tow or sail. In gaps among the hills stood hamlets surrounded by fields, amid rich vegetable gardens ornamented with Bengal roses and various flowering shrubs. Pilgrims, pray for my little King: he is exiled, he is innocent; he begins his pilgrimage as you complete yours, and I end mine. If he is not to reign, a little glory will always be due to me for having roped my lifeboat to the ruins of so great a fate. God alone grants fair winds and a path to harbor.

Approaching Heidelberg, the bed of the Neckar, scattered with rocks, widens. You see the quays of the town and the town itself, of fine appearance. The background to the picture terminates in high ground on the horizon: it seems to form a barrier to the river.

A triumphal arch of red stone announces the entrance to Heidelberg. On the left, on a hill, are the remains of a medieval castle. Apart from their picturesque effect and a few local traditions, the Gothic ruins only interest those who study them. Is a Frenchman to be hampered by those Palatine Lords and Princesses, coarse and pale as they were, with their blue eyes? One would exchange them all for Saint Geneviève de Brabant. Those modern fragments have nothing in common with the people today, except a Christian appearance and a feudal character.

It is otherwise (without counting the sunlight) with the monuments of Greece and Italy; they belong to all nations: history begins with them; their inscriptions are written in languages known to all civilized men. Even the ruins of a renewed Italy are of general interest, since they are imprinted with the seal of art, and the arts of society belong to the public domain. A faded fresco by Dominico or Titian, a crumbling palace by Michelangelo or Palladio, makes genius mourn in any century.

In Heidelberg they show you an enormous barrel, a Coliseum for ruining drunkards; at least no Christian has lost his life in this amphitheater of the Vespasians of the Rhine; his reason, yes: but that is no great loss.

On exit from Heidelberg, the hills open out to right and left of the Neckar, and you enter a plain. A tortuous roadway, elevated a few feet above the level of the wheat fields, runs between two rows of cherry-trees ill-treated by the wind and walnut trees often abused by the passer-by.

Entering Mannheim you pass through hop fields: their long dry poles were as yet only adorned to a third of their height with the climbing plants; Julian the Apostate made a pretty epigram against beer; the Abbé de La Bletterie has imitated it with a degree of elegance:

*'You are naught but a false Bacchus...  
I bear witness to the true.*

.....  
*Let the Gaul, with eternal thirst, I say  
In default of the grape employ the ears  
Of Ceres whose son he cheers:  
Long live the son of Semele!*

Orchards, with walks shaded with willows on every side, form the verdant suburbs of Mannheim. The houses of the town often only possess one storey above the ground floor. The principal street is wide and planted with trees in the middle: yet it is a city out of favor. I do not like false gold: and I have never wished for the imitation worked in Mannheim; but I certainly possess *gold of Toulouse*, judging by the disasters of my life; who more than I, however, has respected the temple of Apollo?

## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 9

The Rhine – The Palatinate – Mont-Tonnerre – Aristocratic Armies, Plebeian Armies – Monastery and castle – A solitary inn – Kaiserslautern – Sleep – Birds - Saarbruck

*3rd and 4th of June 1833.*

I crossed the Rhine at two in the afternoon; at the instant I passed, a steamboat was ascending the river. What would Caesar have thought if he had encountered such a vessel when building his bridge?

On the other side of the Rhine, facing Mannheim, one is again in Bavaria, due to a series of odious sequestrations and the machinations of the Treaties of Paris, Vienna and Aix-la-Chapelle. Everyone has played a part in these hatchet-jobs, without regard to logic, humanity, or justice and without concern for the section of the population that fell into the royal maw.

In travelling through the Palatinate this side of the Rhine, I reflected that the area was formerly a department of France (*Mont-Tonnerre*), that Gaul in white was circled by the Rhine, Germany's *blue sash*. Napoleon, and the Republic before him, realized the dream of several of our kings and especially Louis XIV. As long as we fail to occupy our natural frontiers there will be war in Europe, because self-preservation forces France to seize borders essential to her national independence. Here, we have planted trophies to reclaim at a future time and place.

The plain between the Rhine and the Tonnerre Mountains (*Donnersberg*) is melancholy; the soil and the men seem to say that their fate is not settled, that they belong to no nation; they appear to be waiting on a new armed invasion, like a new inundation of the river. The Germans of Tacitus laid large areas on their frontiers waste, between themselves and their enemies, and left them empty. I'll leave to those populations near borders who cultivate battlefields where nations are to meet!

Further on I saw a sad sight: a wood of six-foot pine saplings cut and tied for faggots, a forest cut unripe. I have spoken about the cemetery at Lucerne: there the children's sepulchres are squeezed together, apart. I have never felt more deeply the desire to end my life, to die beneath the guardianship of a friendly hand applied to my heart, as a test, when they say: '*It no longer beats.*' At the edge of my grave I would like to be able to look back with satisfaction on my numerous years, as a Pontiff arriving at the sanctuary blesses the long train of priests who will serve as his cortege.

Louvois set the Palatinate alight; alas the hand that held the torch was that of Turenne's shade. The Revolution ravaged the same area, witness and victim, time and again, to our aristocratic and plebeian victories. It is enough to name the generals to identify the change of century: on the one hand, Condé, Turenne, Créquy, Luxembourg, La Force, Villars; on the other Kellerman, Hoche, Pichegru, Moreau. Let us not disown any of our triumphs; military glory above all has not gone only to France's enemies, and has not been only of one class: on the battlefield honor and danger level rank. Our forefathers called the blood issuing from a wound that was not mortal *sang volage*: *idle blood*: a phrase characteristic of that disdain for death natural to Frenchman in all centuries. Institutions have no effect on this national spirit. The soldiers who said, after Turenne's death: '*Let Piebald run free: we will camp where she halts,*' would have understood the worth of Napoleon's grenadiers perfectly.

On the heights of Durkheim, the premier rampart of the Gauls on this bank of the Rhine, you will find the sites of camps and military positions now devoid of soldiers: Burgundians, Franks, Goths, Huns, Swabians, waves of the Barbarian deluge, assailed these heights in turn.

Not far from Durkheim are the ruins of an abbey. The monks enclosed in that retreat had a fine view of the armies circling at their feet; they gave good hospitality to the soldiers; there, some crusader ended his life, changing his helm for a hood; there lived passions that summoned silence and repose before the last repose and the final silence. Did they find what they sought? These ruins will not tell.

After the debris of the sanctuary of peace comes the litter of a den of war, the razed bastions, mantlets, curtain-walls, and emplacements of a fortress. The ramparts are crumbling like the cloisters. The castle was sited in a vulnerable pass as a defence against the enemy: it has not prevented time and death from passing by.

From Durkheim to Frankenstein, the road threads its way through a valley so narrow that it barely allows access for a vehicle; the trees descending from the opposite embankments meet and embrace in the ravine. Between Messenia and Arcadia, I followed similar valleys, to the better track nearby: Pan knew nothing of bridges and highways.

Flowering broom and a jay brought back memories of Brittany; I remember the pleasure I derived from that bird's cry in the mountains of Judea. My memory is a panorama; there, on the same screen the most diverse sites and skies come to paint themselves with their burning suns or their misted horizons.

The inn at Frankenstein is set in a mountain meadow, watered by a brook. The post-master speaks French; his young sister, or wife, or daughter is charming. He complains about being Bavarian; he busies himself with exploiting the forests; he reminded me of an American timber-man.

At Kaiserslautern, which I entered at night as I had Bamberg, I traversed a region of dreams: what did all those sleeping inhabitants see in their sleep? If I had the time, I would compose the history of their dreams; nothing would have recalled me to earth if two quails had not called from one cage to another. In the fields in Germany, between Prague and Mannheim, one only meets with crows, larks and sparrows; but the towns are full of nightingales, warblers, thrushes and quails; plaintive prisoners of both sexes whom you greet at the bars of their gaol as you pass. The windows are embellished with carnations, mignonettes, roses and jasmine. The Northern races have the tastes of a different clime; they love the arts and music: the Germans went to seek the vine in Italy; their descendants willingly repeat the invasion to win from the same places birds and flowers.

The coachman changing his jacket alerted me, on Tuesday the 4th of June, at Saarbruck, that I was entering Prussia. Beneath the window of my inn I saw a squadron of hussars file by; they had an animated air: I felt likewise; I would have cheerfully vied at giving those gentlemen a beating, even though a lively feeling of respect attracted me to the Prussian royal family, even though the tempers of the Prussians in Paris had only been reprisals for Napoleon's brutalities in Berlin; but if historians have time to undertake such cool judgements, deducing consequences from principles, the man who is a witness to current events is dragged along by those events, without seeking in the past the causes from which they emerge and which excuse them. She has done me plenty of harm, my country; but how joyfully I would give my

blood for her! Oh, those firm minds, those consummate politicians, above all those fine Frenchmen, who negotiated the treaties of 1815!

A few more hours, and my native land will once more quiver under my feet. What shall I find? For three weeks I have known nothing of my friends' words or actions. Three weeks! A long stretch of time for a man, whom an instant can snatch away, for an empire which three days can overturn! And my prisoner of Blaye, what has become of her? Shall I be able to hand her the message she awaits? If the person of any ambassador ought to be sacred, it should be mine; my diplomatic career was rendered holy in proximity to the Head of the Church; it completed its sanctification in proximity to that of an unfortunate monarch: I have negotiated a new family pact between the descendants of the Béarnais; I have fetched and carried messages between prison and exile, exile and prison.



## BOOK XXXVIII

### CHAPTER 10

#### Forbach to Paris

*4th and 5th of June 1833.*

Crossing the border which separates the territory of Saarbruck from that of Forbach, France did not show herself to me at her most brilliant: first an amputee, then another man crawling along on hands and knees, dragging his legs after him like two twisted tails or dead snakes; then in a cart appeared two old women, blackened, wrinkled, the vanguard of French womanhood. There was something to turn the Prussian army.

But afterwards I encountered a fine young foot-soldier with a young girl; the soldier was pushing the girls' wheelbarrow in front of him, while she carried the trooper's pipe and sabre. Further on another young girl held the handle of a plough, while an old ploughman prodded the oxen; further on an old man begging for a blind child; further on a wayside cross. In a hamlet, a dozen children's heads, at the window of an unfinished house, resembled a group of angels in glory. Behold a little boy of five or six, sitting on the threshold of a cottage; bare-headed, blond-haired, with a dirty visage, pulling a face because of the cold breeze; his white shoulders emerging from a torn canvas smock, his arms crossed over his legs hunched towards his chest, watching everything going on around with birdlike curiosity; Raphael would have *sketched* him, I wanted to take him to his mother.

Entering Forbach, a troop of trained dogs appeared: the two largest were hitched to the costume-wagon; five or six more with varying tails, muzzles, waists and coats followed the baggage, each with a piece of bread in its mouth. Two grave looking trainers, one carrying a big drum, the other carrying nothing at all, led the band. Come, my friends, make a tour of the earth with me, so as to learn how to comprehend the nations. You hold as great a place in the world as I; you like the dogs of my species well enough. Present your paw to Diana, Mirza and Pax, hat over your ear, sword at your side, tail in the air between the wings of your coat; dance for a bone or a blow from a foot as we men do; but don't fall flat when you leap for the King!

Reader, suffer these arabesques; the hand that wrote them will do you no other ill; it is withered. Remember, as you read them, that they are only the capricious scrawls traced by a painter on the arch of his tomb.

At the customs post, an old clerk made a semblance of inspecting my calash. I had a hundred *sous* coin ready; he saw it in my hand but dared not take it in case his superiors were watching. He took off his helmet under the pretext of rummaging more freely, placing it on the cushion in front of me, saying, in a low voice: '*In my helmet, please.*' Oh! The grand phrase! It contains the whole history of the human race; how often liberty, loyalty, devotion, friendship, love have said: '*In my helmet, please!*' I will give that phrase to Béranger as a refrain for one of his songs.

I was struck, on entering Metz, by something I had not noticed in 1821; modern fortifications enveloping the Gothic fortifications: Guise and Vauban are two names rightly associated with one another.

Our years and our memories are laid down in regular and parallel layers, at different depths of our existence, deposited by the tides of time that pass over us in succession. It was from Metz, in 1792, that the column emerged which engaged our little corps of *émigrés* below Thionville. I am entering it from a pilgrimage to the retreat of my banished Prince whom I served in his first exile. I gave a few drops of my blood for him then, I have come from weeping beside him now; at my age one scarcely has any tears left.

In 1821 Monsieur de Tocqueville, my brother's brother-in-law, was Prefect of the Moselle. The saplings, thin as canes that Monsieur de Tocqueville planted in 1820 at the gates of Metz, now give shade. Behold a scale to measure our days; but man is not like the vine, he does not improve by adding the leaves of his years. The ancients infused Falernian wine with rose-petals; when one decanted an amphora from a vintage Consulate, it perfumed the feast. The clearest knowledge would be so infused with its old age that no one would be tempted to get drunk on it.

I had not been in the inn at Metz a quarter of an hour when Baptiste appeared greatly agitated: with a deal of mystery he took a piece of white paper from his pocket in which a seal was wrapped; Monsieur le Duc de Bordeaux and Mademoiselle had entrusted this seal to him, telling him only to hand it to me *on French soil*. They had been anxious the whole night before my departure, fearing that the jeweler would not have time to complete the work.

The seal had three facets: on one an anchor was engraved: on the second the two words that Henri had said to me during our first interview: '*Yes, always!*' on the third the date of my arrival in Prague. The brother and sister begged me to employ the seal *for love of them*. The mystery of this gift, the order from the two exiled children only to reveal this witness to their memory to me *on the soil of France*, brought tears to my eyes. The seal will never leave me; I will carry it for love of *Louise and Henri*.

I enjoyed seeing Fabert's house in Metz, a soldier who became a Marshal of France, and who refused the ribbon of the Order, his nobility only aspiring to a sword.

At Metz, those Barbarians our ancestors cut the throats of Romans surprised in the midst of festive debauchery; our own soldiers waltzed to the monastery of Alcobaça with the skeleton of Inès de Castro: tragedies and pleasures, crime and folly, fourteen centuries separate you, and yet you are utterly past, both one and the other. Eternity begun this moment is as ancient as eternity dated from the first death, the murder of Abel. Nevertheless men, during their ephemeral appearance on this earth, persuade themselves that they have left some trace behind: oh yes, every fly casts a shadow!

Leaving Metz, I passed through Verdun where I was so miserable, where Carrel's lonely friend lives now. I passed along the heights of Valmy; I have no more wish to speak of it than Jemmapes: I would be in fear of stumbling over a crown there.

Châlons recalled a great error Bonaparte committed; he exiled beauty there. Peace to Châlons which reminded me that I still had friends.

At Château-Thierry, I found my god again, La Fontaine. It was the hour of prayer: Jean's wife was no longer there, and Jean returned to Madame la Sablière's house.

Clipping the wall of the cathedral at Meaux, I re-phrased Bossuet's words for him; '*Man arrives at the grave dragging behind him the long chain of his false hopes.*'

In Paris I passed the quarters I had inhabited in my youth with my sisters; then the Palais de Justice, recalling my trial; then the Prefecture of Police, which served me as a prison. I am finally in my hospice once again, unwinding thus the thread of my days. The fragile insect that lives in sheep-barns descends towards the earth on the end of its silken line, where a ewe's feet will crush it.

**End of Book XXXVIII**

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 1

What Madame la Duchesse de Berry had been doing – Charles X's Council in France – My ideas regarding Henri V – My letter to Madame la Dauphine

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, 6th of June 1833.*

On descending from the carriage, and before going to bed, I wrote a letter to Madame la Duchesse de Berry to give an account of my mission. My return had caused a commotion amongst the police; the telegraph announced the news to the Prefect of Bordeaux and the commander of the fortress of Blaye: they were ordered to redouble their surveillance; it seemed they had even forced Madame to embark before the day fixed for her departure. My letter missed Her Royal Highness by a few hours and was sent on to her in Italy. If Madame had not made her declaration; if even after that declaration she had denied the consequences; moreover, if, on arrival in Sicily, she had continued to protest about the role she had been constrained to play to escape her gaolers, France and Europe would have believed what she said, Philippe's government being so suspect. All the Judases would have been punished for the spectacle they had given the world, by the murkiness of Blaye. But Madame did not wish to preserve her political character by denying her marriage; what is gained by a lie regarding one's reputation for ability, is lost in lack of esteem; the sincerity you have been able to claim scarcely aids you. Let someone valued by the public debase themselves, and they are no longer protected by their fame, but are forced to shelter behind their fame. Madame, by confessing, escaped the shadow of prison: the female eagle, like the male, desires freedom and sunlight.

In Prague, Monsieur le Duc de Blacas, announced the formation of a Council which I was to lead, with the former Chancellor, and Monsieur le Marquis de Latour-Maubourg: I (according to Monsieur le Duc) was to be the only one of Charles X's councilors to act *in absentia* in various matters. They showed me a plan: the workings were very complicated; Monsieur de Blacas' draft retained several arrangements made by the Duchesse de Berry, while, on her side, she intended to organize the State, by coming foolishly, but courageously, to place herself at the head of her kingdom *in partibus*. That adventurous woman's ideas did not lack sense: she had divided France into four large military enclaves, designated their leaders, named the officers, formed the soldiers into regiments, and without worrying whether everyone was for the flag, she hastened to bear it herself; she had no doubts of finding in the field Saint Martin's cope, or the Oriflamme, Galaor or Bayard. Blows from war-axes, musket-balls, retreats through the forest, danger at the hearths of loyal friends, caves, castles, cottages, and scaling-ladders: all that was fine and pleasing to *Madame*. There was something odd, original and attractive in the character which gave her life; the future found her willing, despite correct advisors and wise cowards.

If they had summoned me, I would have brought the Bourbons the popularity I enjoyed under my twin titles of writer and Statesman, since I had received support from all shades of opinion. This was not expressed in generalities; each told me what he expected from events; several confessed their genius and freely pointed out the position to which they were eminently suited. Everyone (friends and enemies) sent me to see the Duc de Bordeaux. Because of my various shades of opinion and my chequered fortune, because the ravages of death had removed in succession the men of my generation, I seemed to be the Royal Family's sole remaining choice.

I might have been tempted by the role they assigned me; there was something flattering to my vanity, I, the servant ignored and rejected by the Bourbons, to be a prop to their race, to clasp the hands of Philippe-Auguste, Saint-Louis, Charles V, Louis XII, Francis I, Henri IV, Louis XIV in their tombs; to defend with my feeble renown the blood, the crown, the shades of so many great men, I, alone against faithless France and a debased Europe.

But to achieve it what would I have to do? What the humblest spirit had done: flatter the Court in Prague, overcome its antipathy, and conceal my thoughts from it until I was in a position to develop them.

And indeed, those ideas went far: if I had been the young Prince's tutor, I would have tried hard to win his confidence. If he were destined to recover his crown, I would have counselled him to wear it only in order to sacrifice it at a future time. I wished to see the Capets depart in a manner worthy of their greatness. What a fine and noteworthy day that would be when, having exalted religion, perfected the constitution of the State, extended the rights of citizens, broken the last shackles of the Press, emancipated the boroughs, destroyed monopolies, matched salaries fairly to the work done, strengthened the rights of property while curbing its abuses, re-invigorated industry, lowered taxes, re-established our honor among the nations, and assured, by extending our borders, our freedom from foreign interference; what a fine day that would be when, all of the above being accomplished, my pupil could say to the nation in solemn conclave:

*'People of France your education has ended with mine. My first ancestor, Robert the Strong died for you, while my own father demanded mercy for the man who took his life. My forefathers created France and raised it from barbarism: now the march of the centuries, the progress of civilization no longer requires that you have a tutor. I relinquish the throne; I confirm all my ancestors' benefactions and deliver you from your oaths to the monarchy.'* Tell me whether that end would not surpass whatever was most marvelous about that race? Tell me if as great a temple could ever be erected in its memory? Compare that end, to the one the decrepit sons of Henri IV achieved, obstinately clinging to a throne submerged by democracy, trying to retain power with the aid of police measures, violence, corrupt votes, dragging on a degraded existence for a few instants? *'Let them make my brother King,'* said the young Louis XIII, after the death of Henri IV, *'as for me, I do not wish to be King.'* Henri V has no brother other than his people: let them make him King.

To achieve this outcome, chimerical as it may seem to be, he must feel the greatness of his race, not because he is descended from an ancient line, but because he is the heir of men through whom France became powerful, enlightened and civilized.

Now, as I have explained but a short while ago, the means of being summoned to put my hand to that plan was to fawn on the weak people in Prague, to fly '*shrikes*' with the heir to the throne in imitation of Luynes, to flatter Concini as Richelieu did. I had started well in Carlsbad; a little communiqué full of deference and gossip would have advanced my affairs. To inter myself while still alive in Prague, it is true, would not be easy, for I would not only have to overcome the repugnance of the Royal Family, but also hatred for a stranger. My ideas are odious to government; they know I detest the Treaty of Vienna, that I would embrace war at any price to give France back its required frontiers, and re-establish the balance of power in Europe.

Yet by signs of repentance, tears, expiating my sins against national honor, beating my breast, admiring, as a penance, the genius of the fools who govern the world, perhaps I would be able to crawl to the place occupied by Baron Damas; then, suddenly straightening myself, I would throw away my crutches.

But alas! My ambition, where is it? My ability to deceive where is it? My prop to support the constraint and boredom, where is it? My means of attaching importance to everything that happens, where is that? I picked up my pen two or three times; I began two or three deceitful drafts in obedience to Madame la Dauphine who had commanded me to write to her. Swiftly, rebelling against myself, I wrote in one go, in my own style, the letter which was to end things for me. I knew it well; I weighed the consequences carefully: they mattered little to me. Today, even though the thing is done, I am delighted to have sent it all to the devil and thrown my *tutorship* through a high enough window. People will say: 'Could you not have expressed the same truths but enunciated them with less crudity?' Yes, yes, by prevaricating, writhing, flattering, squirming about, and trembling:

...*His penitent eye weeps only holy water.*

I know not how to do it.

Here is the letter (abridged however by almost half) which made the hairs of our drawing-room diplomats bristle. The Duc de Choiseul shared a little of my mood; and he ended *his* life at Chanteloup.

#### A LETTER TO MADAME LA DAUPHINE

*'Paris, Rue d 'Enfer, 30th of June 1833.*

*Madame,*

*The most precious moments in my long career have been those that Madame la Dauphine has allowed me to spend with her. On a humble mission to Carlsbad a Princess, the object of universal veneration, has deigned to speak to me in confidence. In the depths of her soul Heaven has placed a treasure, of magnanimity and religion, which excessive misfortune has failed to exhaust. I had before me the daughter of Louis XVI in a new exile; that orphan of the Temple, whom the martyred king had pressed to his heart before going to win the palm! God's name alone is to be spoken when one loses oneself in contemplation of the impenetrable designs of his providence.*

*Praise addressed to prosperity is suspect: regarding the Dauphine, admiration may be unrestrained. I have said Madame that your misfortunes have mounted so high they have become one of the glories of the Revolution. I have therefore met once in my life with a destiny so elevated, so individual, as to be able to speak, without fear of harming it or of not being understood, about the future state of society. One can discuss with you the fate of empires, you who would see all the kingdoms of the earth pass before your feet without regret, kingdoms several of which have already fallen at the feet of your race.*

*The catastrophes that made you their most illustrious witness and most sublime victim, as great as they may seem, are nevertheless only particular events within a general transformation operating on the human species; the reign of Napoleon, who shook the world, is no more than a link in the revolutionary chain. One must begin with that reality in order to understand what is possible for a third Restoration,*

*and by what means that Restoration might be framed within the envisaged social change. If it is not incorporated as a homogenous element, it would inevitably be rejected by an order of things inimical to its nature.*

*Thus, Madame, if I were to tell you that there was a possibility of the Legitimacy returning, with the aristocratic nobility and clergy and all their privileges, with the Court and its distinctions, royalty with its prestige, I would be deceiving you. The Legitimacy in France is no more than a sentiment; it is a principle as long as it guarantees property and interest, rights and freedoms; but if it were to demonstrate that it refused to defend, or was powerless to protect, that property and interest, those rights and freedoms, it would cease even to be a principle. If anyone were to claim that the Legitimacy could return by force, that people cannot do without it, that it would only have to appear for France to offer thanks to it on her knees, they would be in error. The Restoration will never re-appear nor last more than a moment, if the Legitimacy seeks power where it no longer resides.*

*Yes, Madame, and I say this sadly, Henri V may remain a foreign, exiled Prince; a young and recent ruin of an ancient building that has already fallen, but still a ruin. We former servants of the Legitimacy, we will soon have expended the little fund of years remaining to us, we will shortly rest in the grave, slumbering among our outdated ideas, like knights of old in their ancient armor gnawed by time and rust, armor that no longer fits nor is adapted to modern use.*

*Everything that in 1789 militated in favor of the old regime, religion, laws, customs, habits, ownership, class, privilege, institutions, no longer exists. A general ferment is in evidence; Europe is hardly more safe from it than ourselves; no mode of society has wholly vanished, none is wholly secure; everything is either worn-out or a novelty, either decrepit or rootless; everything shows the weakness of old age or infancy. Kingdoms born of territorial limitation mapped out by former treaties are things of yesterday; attachment to country has lost its force, because the concept of country is vague and transient for populations sold at auction, hawked like second-hand furniture, now annexed to alien populations, now handed over to unknown masters. Trampled, furrowed, ploughed, the soil was thus ready to receive the democratic seed that the July Days have nurtured.*

*Kings believe that by keeping watch from their thrones, they will halt the progress of ideas; they imagine that by issuing a description of principles they can have them seized at their frontiers; they are persuaded that by increasing the number of customs men, gendarmes, police spies, and military commissions, they will prevent them circulating. But ideas do not travel on foot, they are in the air, they fly about, people breathe them in. Absolute governments that establish telegraph posts, railways, steamboats, and yet at the same time wish to keep thought at the level of fourteenth century political dogma are neither here nor there; at once progressive and reactionary, they mire themselves in the confusion that results from theory and practice in contradiction one with the other. One cannot divorce industrialization from the principle of liberty; one is forced to suppress both or accept both. Everywhere the French language extends, ideas arrive with passports issued by the century.*

*You will see, Madame, how essential it is to make the right start. The child of hope under your protection, the innocent protected by your virtues and misfortune as beneath a royal dais, I know no more imposing spectacle; if the Legitimacy has any chance of success, there it stands in its entirety. The France of the future might bow, without lowering itself, before the glory of its past, halting dumbfounded before this mighty apparition of its history represented by the daughter of Louis XVI, leading the latest Henri by*

*the hand. As Royal protector of the young Prince, you would bring to bear on the nation the influence of vast memories which merge with your august person. Who will not feel an unaccustomed confidence if the orphan of the Temple oversees the education of the orphan of Saint Louis' race?*

*It would be desirable, Madame, if that education, directed by men whose names are popular in France, were to be to some degree public. Louis XIV, who otherwise justified his pride in his motto, did his nation great harm by isolating the sons of France within the confines of an oriental education.*

*The young Prince seemed to me to be endowed with a lively intelligence. He should finish his studies by visiting ancient lands and even the New World, to understand politics and so fear neither institutions nor doctrines. If he has the opportunity to serve as a soldier in some distant foreign war, one should not fear to expose him to it. He has a resolute air; he seems to have his father's and mother's heart; but if he ever knows anything other than a feeling of glory when faced with danger, let him abdicate: without courage, in France, no crown.*

*In seeing me project Henri V's education into the distant future, Madame, you will naturally assume that I do not consider him destined to remount the throne for a long time. I will try to explain impartially my contrasting reasons for hope and doubt.*

*The Restoration could take place today, or tomorrow. Something abrupt and inconstant is so much a part of the French character that change is always likely; the odds are always a hundred to one in France of something failing to last long: it is when the government seems most secure that it falls. We have seen a nation adore and detest Bonaparte, abandon him, re-adopt him, desert him once more, forget him in exile, erect altars to him after his death, then lose its enthusiasm for him. This flighty nation, which loves freedom only on whim, but is always terrified by equality; this multiform nation, was fanatical under Henri IV, factious under Louis XIII, serious under Louis XIV, revolutionary under Louis XVI, sombre under the Republic, bellicose under Bonaparte, and constitutional under the Restoration: it prostitutes its freedom today to a so-called republican monarchy, altering its nature perpetually according to the minds of its leaders. Its changeability has increased since it freed itself from family customs and the yoke of religion. So, some mischance may lead to the fall of the government of the 9th of August; but mischance may be expected: an abortion has been born to us; but France is a robust mother; she can, with her breast-milk, correct the vices of a depraved paternity.*

*Though the present monarchy does not seem viable, I still fear lest it survive beyond the term one might assign to it. For forty years, each government in France has only perished through its own mistakes. Louis XVI could have saved his life and his crown twenty times; the Republic only succumbed to the excesses of its own fury; Bonaparte could have established his dynasty, and yet hurled himself from the heights to the depths of his glory; without the July ordinances, the Legitimacy would still be in place. The leader of the present government will not commit any of the faults that kill; his reign will never commit suicide; all his skill is employed in self-preservation: he is too intelligent to die by folly, and does not have in him whatever makes one guilty of the errors of genius, or the frailties of honor and virtue. He has realized he might perish in war, he will not make war; let France be lowered in the eyes of foreign powers: it matters little to him: the publicists will show that disgrace is good for industry and ignominy for credit.*



*The quasi-Legitimacy wants everything the Legitimacy wants, except for the royal personage: it wants order; it can obtain it by arbitrary power more effectively than the Legitimacy. To act despotically, while employing words of freedom and so-called royalist institutions, is all it desires: every deed accomplished enhances its right to exist: every hour its legitimacy increases. The age employs twin powers: with one hand it overthrows, with the other it builds. Moreover time works on minds by the mere fact that it passes; people are completely alienated from those in power, they attack them, they want nothing to do with them; then lassitude intervenes; success reconciles them to their cause; soon only a few elevated souls remain independent, whose perseverance makes those who have surrendered ill at ease.*

*Madame, this long dissertation obliges me to explain myself to Your Royal Highness.*

*If I had not raised a free voice in the days of good fortune, I would not have the courage to speak the truth in times of misfortune. I did not go to Prague on my own account; I would not have dared annoy you with my presence: the risks of devotion are in France, not in the neighborhood of your august person: it is there I have sought them. Since the July Days I have not ceased fighting on behalf of the Legitimist cause. I was the first to dare to proclaim Henri V's royalty. A French jury, by acquitting me, allowed my proclamation to stand. I only wish for peace, the need of my old age; yet I have not hesitated in sacrificing it whenever decrees extended and renewed the royal family's proscription. Offers were made to me to attach myself to Louis-Philippe's government; I did not merit that kindness; I showed how incompatible it was with my nature, by claiming what might be due to me of my aged King's adversities. Alas! I did not cause those adversities, and I tried to prevent them. I do not recall these circumstances to give myself a false importance or create a merit I do not possess: I only did my duty; I am merely justifying myself, in order to excuse my freedom of expression. Madame will pardon the frankness of a man who would delight in going to the scaffold in order to grant her a throne.*

*When I appeared before Your Majesty at Carlsbad, I may say that I had never had the pleasure of being known there. You had barely had the honor of addressing a word to me during my whole life. You may have felt in private conversation with me that I was not the man others had described to you; that my independence of spirit has not altered my innate sense of moderation, and above all has not broken the bonds of my admiration and respect for the illustrious daughter of kings.*

*Yet I beg Your Majesty to reflect on the fact that the series of truths developed in this letter, or rather this memo, are what constitutes my power, if I have any: it is through them that I move men of diverse parties and bring them back to the royal cause. If I had repudiated the opinions of this century, I would have had no hold on my times. I seek to rally round the ancient throne those modern ideas which, inimical though they may be, become friends by passing the gate of my loyalty. If the flood of Liberal opinion is not diverted to the benefit of legitimate monarchy, European monarchy will perish. There will be a battle to the death between the two principles of monarchy and republicanism, if they remain separate and distinct: the consecration of a unique edifice constructed from the diverse material of the two edifices will belong to you Madame, who have been admitted to the most elevated as well as the most mysterious of initiations, unmerited misfortune, to you who have been marked at the altar with the blood of innocent victims, to you who by winning a saintly austerity will open the gates of the new temple with pure hands.*

*Your intelligence, Madame, and your superior powers of reason will clarify and rectify whatever is doubtful or erroneous in my sentiments concerning the present situation in France.*

*My emotion, in terminating this letter, is greater than I can say.*

*The Palace of the Kings of Bohemia is now the Louvre of Charles X and his royal and pious son! The Hradschin is young Henri's Château of Pau! And you Madame, what Versailles do you inhabit? To what can one compare your religiosity, your greatness, and suffering, if not to that of the women of the House of David who wept at the foot of the cross? May Your Majesty see the royal line of Saint Louis rise radiantly from the tomb! May I proclaim it, while recalling the age which bears the name of your glorious ancestor; for, Madame, nothing is yours, nothing is contemporary with you but the great and the sacred:*

*'... O happy day for me!  
With what ardour I will recognize my King!'*

*I am, Madame, with the profoundest respect for Your Majesty,*

*Your very humble and obedient servant,*

*CHATEAUBRIAND'*

Having written this letter, I lapsed back into my usual life: I sought out my old priests again, the solitary corner of my garden which appeared more beautiful to me than that of Count Chotek, my Boulevard d'Enfer, my Cemetery of the West, my *Memoirs* recalling past days, and above all the little select society of the Abbaye-aux-Bois. The kindness of a deep friendship creates a plenitude of thoughts; a few moments of commerce between souls satisfies the needs of my nature; I then atone for that expenditure of intellect by twenty-four hours of idleness and sleep.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 2

A letter from Madame la Duchesse de Berry

*Paris, Rue d'Enfer, 25th of August 1833.*

While I was regaining my breath, I witnessed the entry to my house one morning of the traveller who had taken a letter of mine to Madame la Duchesse de Berry in Palermo; he brought me this reply from the Princess:

*'Naples, 10th of August 1833.*

*I have written a word to you, Monsieur le Vicomte, to acknowledge receipt of your letter, desiring a sure opportunity of speaking to you of what you have seen and done in Prague. It seems to me that they allowed you to see very little, yet enough to judge that despite the means employed the result, as regards our dear child, gives no grounds for fear. I am very relieved to have had your assurance about the matter; but they tell me from Paris that Monsieur Barrande has been dismissed. What is to be made of that? How I long to take up my rightful place!*

*As for the requests I asked you to make (which were not exactly welcome) they have shown that they were no better informed about it than I: since I have no need of what I requested, having relinquished none of my rights.*

*I am going to ask your advice in replying to the solicitations made to me on all sides. In your wisdom, you may make what use you deem suitable of what follows. Royalist France, people devoted to Henri V, await a proclamation from his mother, free at last.*

*I left a few lines behind at Blaye which should be known by now; they expect more from me; they want to know the sad history of my detention for seven months in that impenetrable fortress. It shall be known in all its terrible detail; let them see the cause of the many tears and sorrows that have broken my heart. They will understand the moral torments I had to suffer. Justice ought to be rendered to the guilty; but also those atrocious measures should be revealed, taken against a woman, defenseless since they always refused her a lawyer, by a government headed by her relative, in order to drag from me a secret which, in any event, should not have concerned politicians, and whose discovery could not alter my position if I was an object of fear to the French government, which had the power to imprison me, but not the right, without a trial which I have more than once demanded.*

*But my relative, my aunt's husband, head of a family to which, despite the opinions so generally and justly levelled against it, I had wished to marry my daughter, Louis-Philippe himself, believing me pregnant and unmarried (which would have resulted in any other family opening the prison gates for me) inflicted every moral torment on me to force me to take steps by which he thought to establish his niece's dishonor. Moreover, if I have to explain in a positive way my declarations and what motivated them, without entering into details of my private life, of which I need account to no one, I say truthfully that they were dragged from me by vexation, moral torment and the hope of recovering my freedom.*

*The bearer will give you details and tell you of the inevitable uncertainty at the time regarding the date of my embarkation and its destination, which thwarted the desire I had to profit from your obliging offer in asking you to meet me before your arrival in Prague, having great need of your advice. Now would be too late, since I hope to be with my children as soon as possible. But since nothing is certain in this world, and since I am accustomed to setbacks, if, against my will, my arrival in Prague is delayed, I certainly count on seeing you wherever I am forced to stop, from where I will write to you; if on the contrary, I am with my son as soon as I wish, you know better than I whether you ought to come. I can only assure you of the pleasure I would have in seeing you at any time and in any place.*

MARIE-CAROLINE'

'Naples, 18th of August 1833

*Our friend having been unable to leave as yet, I am receiving reports about what is happening in Prague which do nothing to diminish my desire to go there, but also make my need of your advice more urgent. If then you can travel to Venice without delay you will find me there, or letters waiting at the post-office, which will tell you where you can find me. I will be making part of the journey with people for whom I have great friendship and know well, Monsieur and Madame Bauffremont. We often speak of you; their devotion to me, and our Henri, makes them wish to see your arrival. Monsieur de Mesnard shares that desire as well.'*

Madame de Berry mentions in her letter a little manifesto published on leaving Blaye which was worth little since it said neither yes nor no. The letter however is interesting as a historical document in revealing the Princess' sentiments regarding the relatives who were her gaolers, and indicating the suffering she had endured. Marie-Caroline's reflections are just; she expresses them with animation and pride. One loves to see that devoted and courageous mother, imprisoned or free, still constantly preoccupied with her son's interests. There, in that heart at least, was youth and life. It would cost me something to start a long journey once more, but I was too moved by that poor Princess' confidences to refuse her wishes and forsake her on the highroad. Monsieur Jauge hastened to relieve my distress as on the first occasion.

I went on campaign with a dozen or so volumes scattered around me. Now, while I journeyed once more in the Prince of Benevento's calash, he dined in London at the expense of his fifth master, in hopes of some accident which might lead him to sleep at Westminster, among the saints, kings and sages; a sepulchre justly due his religiosity, loyalty and virtue.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 3

JOURNAL FROM PARIS TO VENICE: Jura – the Alps – Milan – Verona – A Roll-call of the Dead –  
The Brenta

*En route, the 7th to the 10th of September 1833.*

I left Paris on the 3rd of September 1833, taking the Simplon road via Pontarlier.

Salins, destroyed by fire, had been rebuilt; I preferred it in its ugliness and Spanish decrepitude. The Abbé d'Olivet was born on the banks of the *Furieuse*; Voltaire's first schoolmaster, who welcomed his pupil to the Academy, had no similarity to his native stream.

The great storm which caused so many shipwrecks in the Channel assailed me on the Jura. I arrived at night among the *wastes* of the Lévier relay station. The caravanseraï built of planks, brightly illuminated, full of travellers taking refuge, looked remarkably like the gathering-place for a witches' Sabbath. I did not want to stop: they brought the horses. When it was necessary to shut the lamps on the calash, there was some difficulty; the hostess, a young and extremely pretty sorceress, leant her assistance while laughing. She took care to hold her light, protected by a glass cover, near her face, so as to be seen.

At Pontarlier, my former host, a great legitimist in his lifetime, was dead. I supped at the *National* Inn: a good omen for the newspaper of that name. Armand Carrel is the leader of those who did not tell lies during the July Days.

The Château de Joux protects the approaches to Pontarlier; it has seen two men whose memory the Revolution will preserve occupy its dungeons in succession, Mirabeau, and Toussaint-Louverture, the black Napoleon, imitated, and done to death, by the white Napoleon. '*Toussaint*,' said Madame de Staël, '*was sent to a prison in France where he perished in the most wretched manner. Perhaps Bonaparte only fails to remember that crime, because he has been less criticized for it than others.*'

The storm passed by: I suffered its worst violence between Pontarlier and Orbes. It made the mountains seem taller, made the bells chime in the hamlets, smothered the sound of the torrents with that of the thunder, and threw itself howling at my calash, like a black squall at a vessel's sails. When flashes of lightning below lit the heather, you saw flocks of motionless sheep, heads hidden between their front legs, presenting their docked tails and woolly rumps to the flurries of rain and hail whipped along by the wind. The cry of a man shouting out the time, from the top of a mountain belfry, seemed like the voice of doom.

At Lausanne everything was smiling again: I had visited the town a few times before; I no longer knew anyone there.

At Bex, while they hitched the horses, which may have drawn Madame de Custine's coffin, to my carriage, I leant against the wall of the house where my hostess of Fervaques died. She was noted, before the revolutionary Tribunal, for her long hair. In Rome I saw lovely blond hair recovered from a tomb.

In the Rhône valley, I met a little lass, almost naked, dancing with her goat; she begged charity of a rich well-dressed young man travelling post, with a courier in gold-braid in front and two lackeys seated at the

back of the gleaming coach. And you imagine such a distribution of property can continue? Do you not think it justifies popular uprisings?

Sion recalled an epoch in my life: from being Secretary to the Rome Embassy, the First Consul nominated me as Plenipotentiary Minister to the Valais.

At Brig, I left the Jesuits trying hard to re-create what can no longer exist; established vainly at the feet of time, they were crushed beneath its weight, as their monastery was by the mountainous masses.

I was crossing the Alps for the tenth time; I had said what I had to say to them at various times and in the differing circumstances of my life. Forever regretful of what he has lost, forever wandering among memories, forever marching towards the grave, weeping and in isolation: that is Man.

Images borrowed, above all, from mountainous regions bear an obvious relationship to our lives; this one passes silently like the outflow from a spring; this makes a noise on its way like a torrent; that one pours out its existence like a cataract that terrifies and vanishes.

The Simplon already has a deserted air, like the life of Napoleon; like that life, it no longer possesses any glory; it is too great a work to belong to the little States to whom it has devolved. Genius has no family; its heritage fell by right of alienation to a plebeian people, who scratch away at it, planting a cabbage or growing a cedar.

Last time I crossed the Simplon, I was going to Rome as Ambassador; I have fallen; the shepherds I left behind on the mountain heights are still there: snow, clouds, shattered cliffs, pine forests, thunderous waters, endlessly surround the hut menaced by avalanches. The liveliest personage among those chalets is the she-goat. Why die? I know. Why be born? I have no idea. Yet you realize that the greatest suffering, moral suffering, the torments of the spirit are lessened among the habitations of that region of chamois and eagles. When I went to the Congress of Verona in 1822, the summit station on the Simplon was run by a Frenchwoman; in the midst of a cold night and a squall that prevented my seeing, she spoke to me of La Scala in Milan; she was waiting for ribbons from Paris; her voice, the only thing I could know of the woman, was very sweet in the wind and darkness.

The descent to Domo d'Ossola seemed more and more wonderful to me; some play of light and shadow increased the magic. One was caressed by a little breeze, in our ancient language called *l'aure*, a kind of advanced breath of the morning, bathed and perfumed with dew. I found Lake Maggiore again, where I was so sad in 1828, and which I glimpsed from the valley of Bellinzona in 1832. At Sesto-Calende, Italy proclaimed itself: a blind Paganini was singing and playing his violin by the edge of the lake as we crossed the Ticino.

I saw once more, on entering Milan, the magnificent avenue of tulip-trees which no one mentions: travellers apparently take them to be plane-trees. I protest against this silence, in memory of my savages: it is the slightest of ways in which America grants shade to Italy. One could also plant magnolias mixed with palm and orange trees at Genoa. But who dreams of that? Who thinks of adorning the earth? They leave all that to God. Governments are pre-occupied with their survival, and people prefer a cardboard tree in a puppet-theatre to the magnolia whose flowers might perfume Christopher Columbus' birthplace.

In Milan, the vexation occasioned by passports is as stupid as it is brutal. I never pass through Verona without emotion: it was there that my active political career really began. What might have become of the world, if that career had not been interrupted by wretched envy, presented itself to my mind.

Verona, so animated in 1822 by the presence of the European sovereigns, had returned, in 1833, to silence; in those solitary streets the *Congress* seemed as distant as the Court of the Scaligeri and the Roman Senate. The amphitheater, whose tiers had offered themselves to my eyes charged with a hundred thousand spectators, yawned empty; the buildings I had admired, beneath the illuminated embroidery of their architecture, were enveloped, grey and bare, by a rainy atmosphere.

How many ambitions were stirred among the actors at Verona! The destinies of how many nations were examined, discussed and weighed! Let us make a roll-call of those pursuers of dreams; let us open the book of the Day of Wrath: *Liber scriptus proferetur; the book that is written will be revealed*; Monarchs! Princes! Ministers! Here is your ambassador, here is your colleague returned to his post: where are you? Can you reply?

Alexander, Emperor of Russia? – Dead.

Francis II, Emperor of Austria? – Dead.

Louis XVIII, King of France? – Dead.

Charles X, King of France? – Dead.

George IV, King of England? – Dead.

Ferdinand I, King of Naples? – Dead.

The Grand Duke of Tuscany? – Dead.

Pope Pius VII? – Dead.

Charles-Félix, King of Sardinia? – Dead.

The Duke of Montmorency, Foreign Minister of France? – Dead.

Mr. Canning, Foreign Minister of England? – Dead.

Count von Bernstorff, Foreign Minister of Prussia? – Dead.

Herr von Gentz, of the Austrian Chancellery? – Dead.

Cardinal Consalvi, Secretary of State to His Holiness? – Dead.

Monsieur de Serre, my colleague at the Congress? – Dead.

Monsieur d'Aspremont, my secretary at the Embassy? – Dead.

Count von Neipperg, husband of Napoleon's widow? – Dead.

Countess Tolstoi? – Dead.

Her younger and elder son? – Dead.

My host at the Palazzo Lorenzi? – Dead.

If so many men appearing with me on the register of attendees at the Congress have been inscribed in the death register; if nations and royal dynasties have perished; if Poland has succumbed; if Spain is being torn apart once more; if I have been to Prague to inquire about the fugitive remnants of the great race whose representative I was in Verona, what then are the things of this earth? No one remembers the speeches we uttered around Prince Metternich's table; but, oh the power of genius! No traveller can hear the lark sing in the fields around Verona without recalling Shakespeare. Each of us, searching the depths of their memory, finds a different obituary column, other extinguished feelings, other chimeras nursed in

vain, like those of Herculaneum, at the breast of Hope. On leaving Verona, I was obliged to alter my way of measuring past time; I travelled back twenty-seven years, since I had not taken the route from Verona to Venice since 1806. At Brescia, Vicenza, and Padua, I traversed walls due to Palladio, Scamozzi, Franceschini, Nicholas of Pisa, and Fra Giovanni.

The banks of the Brenta failed my expectation; in my imagination they had remained more welcoming; the elevated dikes along the canal enclose too much marshland. Several *villas* have been demolished; but several elegant ones still remain. There, perhaps, Signor Procurante lives whom great ladies in need of sonnets disgust, whom two pretty girls are beginning to weary, whom music fatigues after a quarter of an hour, who finds Homer a mortal bore, who detests pious Aeneas, little Ascanius, idiotic King Latinus, vulgar Amata and insipid Lavinia; who cares little for Horace's bad dinner on the road to Brindisi, who declares that he never reads Cicero, and still less Milton, a barbarian who ruins Tasso's hell and his devil. 'Alas!' Candide whispered to Martin, *'I fear this man has a sovereign contempt for our German poets!'*

Despite my partial disappointment and the many gods among the little gardens, I was delighted with the silk trees (*asclepias*), the orange and fig-trees and the mildness of the air, I who, such a short time before, was travelling through German pine-woods and Czech mountains where the sun barely shows its face.

I arrived at Fusin, which Philippe de Comines and Montaigne call *Chaffousine*, at daybreak on the 10th of September. At ten thirty I embarked for Venice. My first care was to send to the post-office: there was nothing for me under either my direct address or my indirect one, via Paolo: of Madame la Duchesse de Berry, no news. I wrote to Count Griffi, the Ambassador of Naples to Florence, to ask him to let me know Her Royal Highness' whereabouts.

Settling in, I resolved to wait patiently for the Princess: Satan sent me a temptation. I chose, through his diabolical suggestion, to live alone for a fortnight in the Hôtel de l'Europe, to the great detriment of the Legitimacy. I wished the august voyager a poor journey without considering that my restoration of King Henri V might be delayed by a *half-month*: I asked, as Danton did, forgiveness for it of God and men.



BOOK XXXIX  
CHAPTER 4  
DIGRESSIONS: Venice

*Venice, Hôtel de l'Europe, 10th of September 1833.*

*‘Salve, Italum Regina...  
Nec tu semper eris.*

*Hail, Queen of Italy...  
Though you live not forever.’*

(SANNAZAR)

*‘O d'Italia dolente  
Eterno lume...  
Venezia!*

*Of sorrowful Italy  
Eternal light...*

*O Venice!*

(CHIABRERA)

At Venice, one might think oneself at the tiller of a superb galley at anchor, on the Bucentaur, where they will give you dinner and from whose side you can view admirable things. My hotel, the Hôtel de l'Europe, is sited at the entrance to the Grand Canal facing the Dogana di Mare, Giudecca and San Giorgio Maggiore. When one travels the Grand Canal between its two rows of palaces, stamped by their centuries, so varied architecturally, when one takes oneself to the *great* and *little* piazzas, contemplates the Basilica and its domes, the Doge's Palace, the *Procuratie Nuove*, the *Zecca*, the Torre dell'Orologio, the Campanile, and the Lion Column, all of it interspersed with the masts and sails of boats, the movements of the crowds and the gondolas, the azure sea and sky, the caprices of a dream or the play of an oriental imagination are no more fantastic. Cicéri sometimes paints and groups on canvas, for theatrical spectacles, monuments of every kind, every age, every country and every clime: such is Venice.

Those gilded edifices, adorned profusely by Giorgione, Titian, Paulo Veronese, Tintoretto, Giovanni Bellini, Paris Bordone, and the two Palmas, are full of bronze, marble, granite, porphyry, precious antiques and rare manuscripts; their magic within matches their magic without; and when, in the subtle light that illuminates them, one discovers illustrious names and noble remembrances attached to their vaults, one cries with Philippe de Comines: *‘It is the most triumphant city I have ever seen!’*

And yet she is no longer the Venice of Louis XI's Minister, Venice wedded to the Adriatic and mistress of the seas; Venice who gave Constantinople emperors, Cyprus kings, Dalmatia, the Peloponnese, and Crete princes; Venice who humiliated the German Caesars, and welcomed suppliant Popes to her inviolable hearths; Venice of whom monarchs held it an honor to be citizens, to whom Petrarch, Plethon, and Bessarion bequeathed the remnants of Greek and Roman Letters saved from the barbarian wreckage;

Venice who, a republic in the midst of feudal Europe, served as a shield for Christianity; Venice *planter of the lion* who set her feet upon the ramparts of Acre, Ascalon, Tyre, and defeated the Crescent at Lepanto; Venice whose Doges were the knights' sages and merchants; Venice who subdued the Orient or bought her spices there, who brought from Greece conquered turbans or new-found masterpieces; Venice who emerged victorious from the thankless League of Cambrai; Venice who triumphed as much by her festivals, her courtesans and her arts, as by war and great men; Venice at once a Corinth, an Athens, a Carthage, decking her brow with rostral crowns and flowered diadems.

She is no longer the city I traversed when I visited the shores which witnessed her glory; but, thanks to her voluptuous breezes and her delightful waves, she keeps her charm; decadent countries above all need a beautiful climate. There is enough civilization in Venice for existence to play out its sensitivities there. The seductive sky prevents one needing a more than human dignity; an attractive strength emanates from those traces of grandeur, those remnants of the arts with which one is surrounded. The fragments of the ancient society that produced such things, leaves one no wish for the future. You love to feel yourself dying amongst all that is dying around you; you care for nothing but to adorn the rest of your life while she sheds her leaves. Nature, as quick to create fresh generations among the ruins as to clothe them with flowers, retains in the weakest of races the employments of passion and the enchantments of pleasure.

Venice no longer knows idolatry; she grew Christian on the island where she was nurtured, far from Attila's brutality. The descendants of the Scipios, Paula and Eustochium, escaped the violence of Alaric in the caves of Bethlehem.

Different to all other cities, eldest daughter of ancient civilization and neither dishonored nor conquered, Venice contains neither Roman remains nor Barbarian monuments. One sees nothing of what one sees in the north and west of Europe, amongst works of industrial progress; I speak of those new constructions, entire streets thrown up in haste, whose houses remain half-built or empty. What could they build here? Wretched shacks which would show the poverty of conception of the sons beside the magnificent genius of their fathers; pallid huts which could not compare with the gigantic residences of the Foscari and the Pesaro. When one thinks of the trowel full of mortar and handful of plaster whose application to a marble capitol urgent repairs have demanded, one is shocked. Rather the worm-eaten planks barring Greek or Moorish windows, the rags hung out to dry on elegant balconies, than the imprint of our century's puny hand.

If only I might shut myself up in this city in harmony with my destiny, in this city of poets, which Dante, Petrarch and Byron passed through! If only I might finish writing my *Memoirs* by the light of the sun which falls on these pages! At this very moment the sun still scorches my Floridian savannahs and is setting here at the extremity of the Grand Canal. I no longer see it; but through a gap in those lonely palaces, its rays strike the globe of the *Dogana*, the spars of boats, the yards of vessels, and the gates of the monastery of *San Giorgio Maggiore*. The monastery tower, changed to a rose-colored pillar, is reflected in the waves; the white façade of the church is so brightly lit that I can see the tiniest of chiseled details. The shop walls of the *Giudecca* are painted with Titianesque light; the gondolas on the canal and in the harbor swim in the same glow. Venice is seated there at the edge of the sea, like a beautiful woman who will vanish with the day: the evening breeze lifts her fragrant hair; she is dying, hailed by all of Nature's smiles and graces.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 5

Venetian Architecture – Antonio – The Abbé Bettio and Monsieur Gamba –  
Rooms in the Doge's palace – Prisons

*Venice, September 1833.*

In Venice, in 1806, I remember the young Signor Armani, the Italian translator, or a friend of the translator, of *Le Génie du Christianisme*. His sister, so he said, was a *nun* (*monaca*). There was also a Jewish gentleman on his way to the farce of Napoleon's Grand Sanhedrin who eyed my purse; then there was Monsieur Lagarde, head of French espionage, who had me to dinner: my translator, his sister, and the Sanhedrin Jew, are either dead or no longer live in Venice. In those days, I stayed at the White Lion Inn, near the Rialto; that inn has changed location. Almost facing my former hostelry is the Foscari Palace which is falling down. Away, all these old fragments of my life! Those ruins will drive me mad: let us speak of the present.

I have tried to describe the general effect of Venetian architecture; in order to give an account of the details I travelled up and down the Grand Canal, and visited and revisited St. Mark's Square.

Volumes are needed to cover the subject exhaustively. Count Cicognara's *Le Fabbriche più cospicue di Venezia* shows the features of the monuments; but the presentation is not clear enough. I will content myself with noting two or three of the most common arrangements.

From the capital of a Corinthian column a semi-circle is described which ends on the capital of a second Corinthian column: in the midst of these a third is erected, of the same order and dimensions; from the capital of this central column two further semi-circles rise to left and right whose extremities also rest on the capitals of the other columns. The result of this design is that the arches, intersecting, give rise to ogives at the point of intersection (It is clear to me that the ogive whose origin, deemed mysterious, is sought far and wide, is born fortuitously from the intersection of two rounded arches; and it is found everywhere. Architects have merely succeeded in extracting it from the designs in which it appears) such that it forms a delightful blend of two architectural styles, the Roman rounded arch and the Arab ogive, or oriental Gothic. I here agree with present opinion, in supposing the Arab ogive to be Gothic, or of the Middle Ages, in origin; but it definitely exists in the monuments termed cyclopean: I have seen it in its pure form in the tombs of Argos.

The Doge's Palace reveals tracery reproduced in other palaces, particularly the Foscari Palace: the pillars support ogive arches; these arches leave intervening spaces: in these spaces the architect has placed rose windows. Each rose window rests between the points of two arches. These rose-windows, which also touch one another at a point on their circumference, on the building's façade, act like a row of wheels on which the rest of the building rises.

In most construction the base is usually substantial; the building reduces in thickness as it ascends into the sky. The Ducal Palace precisely contradicts this natural architecture: the base, pierced by light porticoes surmounted by a gallery with arabesques, indented with four-leaved clover tracery, supports an almost bare rectangular mass: it could be called a fortress on pillars, or rather an upturned building planted on its airy crown its thick roots in the air.

The architectural masks and heads decorating the Venetian buildings are noteworthy. On the Pescaro Palace, the entablature of the first storey, of Doric order, is decorated with the heads of giants; the Ionic order of the second storey is decorated with the heads of knights projecting horizontally from the wall, faces turned towards the water: some cased in a beaver, others with visor half-lowered; all with helmets whose plumes curl into the ornamentation of the cornice. Finally, on the third storey, of Corinthian order, there are heads of female statues with variously knotted hair.

At St Mark's, embossed with domes, incrustated with mosaics, loaded incoherently with the spoils of the Orient, I thought myself at the same moment at San Vitale in Ravenna, Sancta Sophia in Constantinople, St Saviour in Jerusalem, and in those lesser churches of the Morea, Chios and Malta: St Mark's, of composite Byzantine architecture is a monument of victory and conquest raised to the Cross, as the whole of Venice is a trophy. The most remarkable effect of its architecture is its shadiness under a bright sky; but today, the 10th of September, the dim light outdoors was in harmony with the sombre basilica. They have completed the forty hours of prayer required to obtain good weather. The fervor of the faithful, praying against rain, was profound: a grey and aqueous sky is like the plague to Venetians.

Our wishes have been granted: the evening was delightful; tonight I walked along the quay. The sea was smooth; the stars mingled with the scattered lights of the boats and other vessels anchored here and there. The cafes were full; but I saw no Punchinellos, Greeks, or Barbary Pirates: all that is done with. A Madonna, brightly lit at the entrance to a bridge, drew a crowd: girls on their knees said their paternosters devotedly; with her right hand she made the sign of the cross, with her left hand she stopped passers-by. Returning to my inn, I lay down and slept to the singing of the gondoliers stationed beneath my windows.

I have Antonio as my guide, the oldest and wisest cicerone in the land: he knows the palaces, statues and paintings by heart.

On the 11th of September, I visit the Abbé Bettio and Monsieur Gamba, curators at the library: they welcome me with extreme courtesy, even without a letter of recommendation.

Traversing the rooms of the Ducal Palace, you pass from marvel to marvel. There the entire history of Venice is revealed painted by the greatest masters: their pictures have been described a thousand times.

Among the antiquities, I noted, as all do, the group of Leda and the Swan, and the Ganymede said to be by Praxiteles. The swan is prodigious in terms of its grip and its voluptuousness; Leda is too complacent. The eagle of the Ganymede is not a true eagle; it looks like the gentlest of creatures. Ganymede, pleased to be carried off, is delightful: he speaks to the eagle who replies.

These antiquities are placed at either end of the magnificent halls of the library. With a poet's sacred respect, I contemplated a manuscript of Dante's, and gazed with a traveler's avidity at Fra Mauro's Mappa Mundi (1460). Africa however did not seem as accurately traced as was said. Above all one ought to explore the *archives* of Venice: one would find there many precious documents.

From painted and gilded salons, I passed to *dungeons* and *cells*; the one palace offers a microcosm of society, pleasure and sorrow. The cells are *beneath the leads*, the dungeons *at the level of* the canal and on the second storey. They tell a thousand tales of secret strangulations and decapitations; by contrast, they tell of one prisoner who emerged, large, fat and ruddy from the oubliettes, after eighteen years in captivity: he had survived like a toad inside a stone. Honor to the human race! What a fine thing it is!

Perhaps philanthropic maxims adorn the walls and ceilings of dungeons, since our Revolution, so hostile to shedding blood '*to that fearful stay, with a blow from an AXE, brought the light of day.*' In France, they cluttered the cells with victims whom they got rid of by cutting their throats; but they delivered the shades of those who were never there perhaps from the prisons of Venice; the gentle executioners who beheaded old men and children, the benign spectators who helped to guillotine women were moved by the progress of humanity, as is well proven by the opening of the Venetian dungeons. As for me, I am cold-hearted; I cannot match these heroes of sensibility. No old headless larvae were presented to my eyes beneath the Doge's Palace; I only seemed to see in the dungeons of the aristocracy what the Christians saw when they shattered the idols, nests of mice escaping from the heads of the gods. That is what happens to all power eviscerated and exposed to the light; vermin emerge that worshippers have adored.

The Bridge of Sighs links the Ducal Palace to the city prison; it is divided in two lengthwise: on one side *ordinary prisoners* entered; on the other *prisoners of State* approached the Tribunal of Inquisitors or the *Ten*. The bridge is elegant on the outside, and the prison's façade is admired: you cannot avoid beauty in Venice, even with regard to tyranny and misfortune! Pigeons make their nests on the window ledges of the gaol; little doves, covered with down, flap their wings and coo at the bars while waiting for their mother. In days past, they cloistered innocent creatures almost as they emerged from the cradle; their parents no longer saw them except through the visiting-room grille or the wicket gate.

BOOK XXXIX  
CHAPTER 6  
The Prison of Silvio Pellico

*Venice, September 1833.*

You may well imagine that in Venice I was of necessity interested in Silvio Pellico. Monsieur Gamba told me that Abbé Bettio was keeper of the palace, and that by addressing him I could carry out my research. The excellent librarian, to whom I had recourse one morning, took a great bunch of keys and led me through several corridors and up various stairs, to the attic rooms of the author of Mie Prigioni.

Monsieur Silvio Pellico was not wrong about one thing; he spoke of his gaol as of those famous dungeons in the air, called from their roofs *sotti I piombi* (*above the leads*). Those prisons are, or rather were five in number in the part of the Ducal Palace which is close to the *Ponte della Paglia* and the canal with its *Bridge of Sighs*. Pellico did not stay there; he was incarcerated at the other end of the palace, towards the *Ponte di Canonico*, in a building attached to the palace; a building transformed into a prison for political detainees in 1820. Moreover, he was also beneath the leads, since a sheath of that metal formed the roof of his hermitage.

The description the prisoner gave of his two rooms is exact to the last detail. Through the window of the first room, you overlook the heights of St Mark's; you can see the wells in the interior courtyard of the palace, one end of the great square, various bell-towers of the city, and beyond the lagoon, on the horizon, the mountains towards Padua; you recognize the second room by its large window and its other high little window; through the large one Pellico saw his companions in misfortune in the central building facing him, and to his left, above, the sweet children who spoke to him from their mother's casement.

Today all these rooms are abandoned, since no one inhabits them, not even prisoners; the window grilles have been removed, the walls and ceilings white-washed. The gentle and wise Abbé Bettio, lodged in this deserted part of the palace, is its peaceable and solitary guardian.

The rooms which immortalize Pellico's captivity do not lack elevation; they have air, and a superb view; they are a poet's prison; he had little to tell, as tyranny and absurdity admitted: but the death-sentence for speculative opinions! A dungeon in Moravia! Ten years of life, youth and talent! Mosquitoes, foul insects that ate me too in the Hôtel de l'Europe, hardened as I am by time and by the *maringouins* (*mosquitoes*) of the Floridas. Moreover I have often been worse lodged than Pellico was in his belvedere of the Ducal Palace, notably at the Prefecture of the doges of the French police: I was also obliged to climb on a table to see the light of day.

The author of Francesca da Rimini thought of Zanze in his gaol; in mine I sang of a young girl I had just seen die. I very much wanted to know what had become of Pellico's little gaoler. I have set my people searching for her: if I find anything out, I will let you know.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 7

The Frari – The Accademia di Belle Arti – Titian's *Assumption* – The Metopes of the Parthenon – Original drawings by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael – The Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo

Venice, September 1833.

A gondola dropped me at the *Frari*, where we French, accustomed as we are to the Greek or Gothic exteriors of our churches, are struck by the facade of a brick basilica unprepossessing and ordinary to the eye; but in the interior the harmony of line, and disposition of mass produces simplicity and a calm of composition which enchants.

The *Frari* tombs, set in the lateral walls, adorn the edifice without cluttering it. The magnificence of the marble gleams on every side, the delightful ornamental leafage testifies to the end of ancient Venetian sculpture. On one of the paving stones in the nave one reads these words: *Here lies Titian who emulated Zeuxis and Apelles*. The stone lies beneath one of the painter's masterpieces.

Canova's *sumptuous sepulchre* lies not far from Titian's slab: the sepulchre is a realization of the monument which the sculptor had conceived for Titian himself, and which he later executed for the Arch-Duchess Marie-Christine. The remains of the creator of the *Hebe* and the *Magdalen* were not all buried together in this structure: thus Canova inhabits the realization of a tomb made by him, but not for him, which is only a half-cenotaph.

From the *Frari*, I went to the *Manfrin* Gallery. The portrait of *Ariosto is alive*. *Titian* has painted his mother, an old woman of the people, grimy and ugly: the artist's pride is felt in the exaggeration of the woman's age and poverty.

At the *Accademia di Belle Arti*, I hastened to the painting of the *Assumption*, discovered by *Count Cicognara*: there are ten large male figures at the foot of the painting; note the man, gazing at Mary and transported by ecstasy, at the left. The Virgin, above this group, rises from a semi-circle of cherubs; there are a multitude of admirable faces lost in glorification: a woman's head at the right, at the end of the curve is of indescribable beauty; two or three divine spirits are thrown horizontally across the sky in the bold and picturesque manner of *Tintoretto*. I am not sure if an angel standing does not display too earthly a sentiment of love. The Virgin's proportions are good; she is covered by a red robe; her blue sash floats in the air; her eyes are raised towards the Eternal Father, appearing to her, at the culminating point. Four distinct colors, brown, green, red and blue, adorn the work: the aspect of it all is sombre, the character not idealized, but of an incomparable natural truth and vivacity: yet I prefer the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, by the same painter, which can be seen in the same room.

Facing the *Assumption*, lit with much artifice, is the *Miracle of St Mark*, by *Tintoretto*, a vigorous drama which seems rather to have been carved from the canvas with mallet and chisel than painted with a brush.

I passed to the plaster casts of the Metopes from the Parthenon; these casts have a triple interest for me; in Athens I saw the empty spaces left behind by the ravages of *Lord Elgin*, and, in London, the marbles he removed whose casts I found in Venice. The errant destiny of these masterpieces is bound up with mine, and yet *Phidias* did not fashion my clay.

I could not tear myself away from the original drawings by Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael. Nothing is more engaging than these sketches of genius, owed only to its studies and caprices; it admits you to intimacy; it initiates you into its secrets; it allows you to learn by what degrees and effort it achieved perfection: you are delighted to see how it made mistakes, how it realized and redressed its errors. Those strokes of the crayon traced on a table corner, on a wretched scrap of paper, retain nature's marvelous abundance and simplicity. When one thinks that Raphael's hand has traversed those immortal fragments, one wishes oneself inside the glass that prevents one kissing the holy relics.

I relaxed from the admiration I felt in the Accademia di Belle Arti by an admiration of a different sort in Santi Giovanni e Paolo; so one refreshes the spirit by a change of study. This church, whose unknown architect followed in the footsteps of Nicolo Pisano, is rich and vast. The apse which contains the main altar presents a kind of upright conch; two sanctuary altars about this conch laterally; they are tall, narrow, with multi-centered arches, and separated from the apse by grooved planks.

The remains of the Doges Mocenigo, Morosini, Vendramin and other leaders of the Republic, rest here. Also the skin of Antonio Bragadino, defender of Famagusta, to which Tertullian's expression can be applied: *a living skin*. These famous tombs inspire a deep and painful sentiment; Venice herself, the magnificent catafalque of her warrior magistrates, double coffin of their remains, is nothing but a living skin.

Stained glass and red draperies, by veiling the light in Santi Giovanni e Paolo, add to the religious effect. The countless pillars, brought from Greece and the Orient, have been planted in the basilica like alleys of foreign trees.

A storm arrived as I was wandering about the church: when the trumpet sounds who will wake all these dead? I would have said there were as many below Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

After these visits, returning to the Hôtel de l'Europe, I thanked God for having transported me from the pigs of Waldmünchen to the pictures of Venice.



## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 7

The Arsenal – Henri IV –A frigate leaving for America

Venice, September 1833.

After my discovery of the prisons where Austrian materiality tried to stifle Italian intellect, I went to the Arsenal. No monarchy, however powerful, has offered an equivalent maritime factory.

An immense space, enclosed by crenellated walls, surrounds four docks for high-sided vessels, the shipyards to build such vessels, the workshops for whatever concerns the navy and merchant marine, from rope-works to foundries for cannon, from the workshops where they shape the oars for gondolas to those where they carve out the keel of a seventy-four, from the rooms given over to antique weapons won at Constantinople, Cyprus, the Morea and Lepanto, to the rooms where modern weapons are displayed: the whole mingled with pillared galleries, architecture designed and created by the leading masters.

In the naval arsenals of Spain, England, France and Holland you see only what relates to the purpose of those arsenals; in Venice, the arts unite with industry. The monument to Admiral Emo, by Canova, awaits you beside the carcass of a ship; rows of cannon appear through long porticoes: the two colossal lions from Piraeus guard the gates of the dockyard from which frigates emerged to a world that Athens never knew, and that revealed the genius of modern Italy. Despite these fine Neptunian remains, the arsenal merely recalls those lines of Dante:

*'As in the arsenal in Venice,  
they boil the clammy pitch in winter  
to caulk those damaged ships*

*they cannot sail, and laboring there  
one builds anew, another stops the ribs  
of a vessel that has widely fared;*

*some hammer at the prow, some the stern;  
some shape oars, and others twine the rope;  
one mends the mainsail, another mends the jib:'*

All that activity is done with; the emptiness of nine tenths of the Arsenal, the unlit furnaces, the rusting boilers, the shipyard without workers, the rope-works without winding-wheels, bear witness to the same death which has struck the palaces. Instead of a crowd of carpenters, sail-makers, sailors, caulkers and ship's apprentices, I glimpsed a few galley-slaves dragging their shackles: two of them were eating on a cannon's breech-block; at that iron table they could at least dream of liberty.

In the past, when those galley-slaves rowed the Bucentaur, they threw a purple tunic over their stringy shoulders to make them look like kings: cleaving the waves with gilded oars, they exercised their labor to the rattle of chains, as in Bengal, at the Durga, the dances of the dancing girls, clothed in golden gauze, are accompanied by the tinkling of the bracelets with which their necks, arms and legs are adorned. The

Venetian convicts wedded the Doge to the sea, and themselves renewed in slavery their indissoluble union.

Of the numerous fleets that carried the crusaders to the shores of Palestine and denied all foreign sails access to the Adriatic breezes, one *Bucentaur* in miniature remains, Napoleon's canoe, a dugout of savages, and plans for vessels, traced in chalk on the blackboards of the Naval colleges.

A Frenchman arriving from Prague and waiting in Venice for Henri V's mother cannot help but be touched to see Henri IV's armor in the Venice Arsenal. The sword the Béarnais carried at the Battle of Ivry belongs with the armor: the sword is now missing.

By a decree of the Grand Council of Venice, of the 3rd of April 1600; *Enrico di Borbone IV, re di Francia e di Navarra, con li figliuoli e discendenti suoi, sia annumerato tra I nobili di questo nostro maggiore consiglio: Henry IV of Bourbon, King of France and Navarre, with all his sons and descendants, will be counted among the nobles of this our Grand Council.*

Charles X, Louis XIX and Henri V, descendants *di Enrico di Borbone*, are thus gentlemen of the Venetian Republic which no longer exists, as they are kings of France and Bohemia, as they are canons of St. John Lateran in Rome, and always by virtue of Henri IV; I represented them in that capacity: they have lost their hoods and furs, and I have lost my Embassy. Yet I was so fine in my stall at St. John Lateran! What a lovely church! What a beautiful sky! What admirable music! Those hymns have lasted longer than my greatness and that of my Royal Canon.

My glory bothered me in the Arsenal; it shone on my brow without my knowing it: Field-Marshal Palucci, Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, recognized me by my horns of fire. He hastened to show me various curiosities himself; then, excusing himself for not being able to accompany me longer, because of a council meeting which he was off to preside over, he left me in the hands of a senior officer.

We met the captain of the frigate which was about to depart. He approached me without any fuss, and said, with that sailor's easiness that I so love: '*Monsieur le Vicomte* (as if he had known me all his life) *have you any commissions for America?*' – '*No, captain: but give it my best compliments, it is a long time since I saw it!*'

I cannot gaze at any ship without dying of envy to sail in her: if I were free, the first vessel travelling to the Indies would have its opportunity to carry me. How I regret not accompanying Captain Parry to the Polar Regions! My life is only enjoyable in the midst of sea and cloud: I always hope that it will vanish under sail. The heavy years we throw into the waves of time are not anchors; they do not arrest our course.

BOOK XXXIX  
CHAPTER 9  
Saint Christopher's Cemetery

*Venice, September 1833.*

At the Arsenal, I was not far from the Isle of San Cristoforo, which serves today as a cemetery. The island contains a Capuchin monastery; the monastery has been razed and its site is merely an enclosure, square in shape. The graves are not very prolific, or at least they do not show above the levelled ground covered with grass. Against the west wall are piled half a dozen stone monuments; little crosses of blackened wood with a white date are scattered around the enclosure: this is how they inter the Venetians now whose ancestors rest in the mausoleums of the *Frari* and *San Giovanni e Paolo*. Society while expanding has abased itself; democracy has overcome death.

At the edge of the cemetery, to the east, one finds the sepulchres of Greek schismatics and those of Protestants; they are separated by a wall between and separated further from the Catholic burials by another wall: sad dissensions whose memory is perpetuated in the place where all quarrels end. Attached to the Greek cemetery is another entrenchment which protects a hole where they hurl children, born dead, into Limbo. Fortunate creatures! You have passed from the night of the maternal womb to the eternal night, without having traversed the light!

Near this hole, lie bones dug from the soil like roots, whenever they clear the ground for new graves: some, the oldest, are white and dry; others, recently unearthed, are yellow and moist. Lizards scamper among the remains, gliding between the teeth, traversing the eye-sockets and nostrils, emerging from the skulls' mouths and ears, their homes or lairs. A few butterflies, symbols of the soul under skies descended from those beneath which the story of Psyche was invented, flutter among the mallow flowers growing between the bones. One cranium still bore hair the color of mine. Poor old gondolier! Did you at least steer your boat better than I have steered mine?

A common grave remains open in the enclosure; a doctor has just descended there to lie beside his former patients. His black coffin was only covered with earth above, and his naked flank awaited the touch of another corpse's flank to warm him. Antonio had deposited his wife there a fortnight ago, and the deceased doctor had dispatched her there. Antonio blessed the God who repays and revenges, and accepted his misfortune patiently. The individual coffins are conducted to this gloomy bazaar in individual gondolas followed by a priest in another gondola. As the gondolas are like coffins they suit the ceremony. A larger boat, the omnibus of the Cocytus, provides a service to the hospitals. Thus are revived the interments of Egypt and the myth of Charon and his barque.

In the cemetery towards Venice an octagonal chapel rises, consecrated to St. Christopher. This saint, carrying a child on his shoulders over a ford, found him heavy: now, the child was the son of Mary and held the world in his hand; the altar painting depicts that great crossing.

And I too chose to carry a child King, but I did not notice that he was asleep in his cradle with ten centuries or more: a burden too heavy for my arms. In the chapel I noted a wooden candlestick (the candle was out), a stoop used to bless the graves, and a booklet: *Pars Ritualis romani pro usu ad exsequianda corpora defunctorum: Part of the Roman ritual to be used for the obsequies of the dead*; when we are

already forgotten, Religion, immortal parent, ever unwearied, weeps for us and follows us, *exsequor fugam: followed in flight*. A box contained a flame; God alone disposes of the spark of life. Two quatrains written on ordinary paper had been pasted inside the notice boards on a couple of doors of the building:

*‘Quivi dell’ uom le frali spoglie ascose  
Pallida morte, o passegger, t’addita, etc.*

*The fragile remains of men are buried here,  
You, O passer-by, Pale Death marks out, etc.’*

The only tomb in the cemetery which was the least unusual was raised in advance by a woman who then waited eighteen years before dying; the inscription explains this circumstance; so the woman longed in vain for her grave for eighteen years. What disappointment nurtured that enduring hope in her?

On a little black wooden cross this other epitaph can be read: *Virginia Acerbi, d’anni 72, 1824. Morta nel bacio del Signore. Virginia Acerbi, 72 years old, 1824. Dead in the arms of the Lord: the years are hard on a beautiful Venetian.*

Antonio said to me: *‘When this cemetery is full, they will leave it lie, and inter the dead on the Island of San Michele di Murano.’* The phrase was fitting; the harvest done one leaves the earth fallow and ploughs other furrows elsewhere.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 10

San Michele di Murano – Murano – The woman and child - Gondoliers

Venice, September 1833.

We went to see the other field that awaits the great ploughman. San Michele di Murano is a pleasant monastery with an elegant church, porticoes and a white cloister. From the monastery windows you can see the Venice Lagoon through the porticoes; a garden full of flowers meets the lawn whose compost is still maturing beneath a young girl's skin. This charming retreat has been surrendered to the Franciscans: it would suit nuns better, who might sing like the little pupils of Rousseau's *Scuole*. 'Happy are those,' says Manzoni, 'who have taken the holy veil before setting eyes on a man's face!'

Grant me a cell there, I beg you, to complete my *Memoirs*.

Fra Paolo is buried at the entrance to the church; that seeker of noise must be furious at the silence that surrounds him.

Pellico, condemned to death, was held at San Michele before being transported to the fortress of Spielburg. The President of the Tribunal that Pellico appeared before replaced the poet at San Michele; the former is buried in the cloister; he has never emerged from that prison.

Not far from the magistrate's grave is that of a foreign lady: married at twenty, in January, she died in the following February. She did not wish to outlive her honeymoon; the epitaph reads: *Ci rivedremo: we will meet again. If it be true!*

Away with that doubt, away with the thought that anguish may fail to tear apart the nothingness! Atheist, when death sinks his nails in your heart, who knows if in the last moment of consciousness, before the destruction of the *self*, you will not experience an agony of grief capable of filling eternity, an immensity of suffering of which no human being can form an idea within time's circumscribed limits? Oh, yes, *ci rivedremo!*

I was too close to the island and town of Murano, not to visit the workshop from which Combouurg obtained the mirrors in my mother's room. I did not see that workshop, which is now closed; but they spun before me, as time spins our fragile life, a thin rope of glass: it was of that glass that the bead was made that hung from the nose of the little Iroquois girl at Niagara Falls: a Venetian hand had shaped the ornament for a savage.

I met with greater beauty than Mila's, a woman carrying a child in swaddling clothes; the fineness of colorings, and the charming glance of that Muranese are idealized in my memory. She had a sad and preoccupied air. If I had been Lord Byron, the occasion might have been favorable for an attempt at seducing the wretched; you get a long way here with a little money. Then, drunk on my success and my genius I might have created desperation and loneliness beside the waves. Love seems something else to me: I have lost sight of *René* for many years; but I do not know that he found the cure for his boredom in pleasure.

Every day after my sightseeing I went to the post-office, and found nothing there: Count Griffl failed to reply to me from Florence; the newspapers permitted in this land of liberty had not dared to record that a traveller had arrived at the White Lion. Venice, where the *gazette* was born, is reduced to reading the notices that announce on the same placard both the opera of the day and the time of Holy Sacrament. The Aldus's will not rise from their graves to embrace, in my person, the defender of liberty and the Press. They must wait for me there instead. Returning to my inn, I dined and amused myself with the society of the gondoliers stationed, as I said, beneath my window at the entrance to the Grand Canal.

The gaiety of these sons of Nereus never leaves them; clothed by the sun, the sea nourishes them. They are not lazing around, at a loose end, like the *lazzaroni* of Naples: always in motion, they are sailors without a ship or a task, but who would nevertheless create world trade and win the battle of Lepanto, if the age of Venetian liberty and glory were not past.

At six in the morning they arrive at their gondolas, moored, prow shoreward, to the posts. Then they begin to scrape and clean their *barchette* (little boats) at the *Traghetti* (piers), like dragoons currying, sponging and grooming their horses at the picket. The touchy sea-horse cavorts about, rocked by the movement of her rider who scoops up water in a wooden bucket and pours it over the sides and interior of the vessel. He repeats the process several times, having to skim the surface to get at the purer water beneath. Then he scrapes the oar, and polishes the leather upholstery and the windows of the little black cabin; he dusts off the cushions, the curtains, and burnishes the iron that trims the prow. All is done with humorous or tender comments addressed, in the charming Venetian dialect, to the capricious or docile gondola.

The gondola's toilette having been completed, the gondolier turns his attention to his own: he combs his hair, shakes out his jacket and his blue, red or grey cap; and washes his face, feet and hands. His wife, daughter or mistress brings him a bowl with an assortment of vegetables, bread and meat. Breakfast finished, each gondolier awaits good-fortune while singing: he has her image before him, one foot in the air, offering her robe to the wind and serving as a weather-vane, at the top of the *Dogana di Mare*. Has she given the signal? The favored gondolier, oar raised, departs standing at the rear of his boat, as Achilles once stood in his chariot, or as one of Franconi's riders gallops along today standing on his horse's hindquarters. The gondola, shaped like an ice skate, slides over the water as if it were frozen. Then it's '*Sia stat!*' and '*Sta longo!*' (*Halt! Go on!*), all day long. Then comes the night, and the *calle* (alley) will see my gondolier with his *zitella* (girl) singing and drinking away the *half-sequin* (gold) I give him as I depart to replace Henri V, in all probability, on his throne.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 11

The Bretons and Venetians – Breakfast on the Riva degli Schiavoni – Mesdames at Trieste

*Venice, September 1833.*

On waking, I discovered why I love Venice so much: suddenly imagining I was in Brittany: the blood in me was roused. In Caesar's day was there not a tribe of Venetians in Armorica, *civitas Venetum*, *civitas Venetica*? Does not Strabo say that they say that the Venetians were descended from the Gallic Venetians?

It has been maintained, in contradiction to this, that the fishers of Morbihan were a colony of *pescatori* from Pellestrina: Venice was the mother and not the daughter of Vannes. One can settle the matter by supposing (which is quite probable moreover) that *Vannes* and *Venice* were mutually derived from one another. So I consider the Venetians as Bretons; the gondoliers and I are cousins and emerged from the horn of Gaul, *cornu Galliae*.

Rejoicing in this thought, I went to breakfast in a café on the Riva degli Schiavoni, the *Quay of Slav(e)s*. The bread was soft, the tea scented, the cream like that in Brittany, the butter à la Prévalaie; since butter, thanks to the progress of the enlightenment, has improved everywhere: I ate some excellent butter in Granada. A harbor's activity always delights me: boatmen were having a picnic; fruit and flower sellers offered me citrons, raisins and bouquets; fishermen were preparing their boats; naval cadets leapt into a launch, off to their sailing lessons aboard the flagship; gondolas carried passengers to the Trieste steamboat. It was Trieste which nearly caused me to be cut to pieces by Bonaparte on the steps of the Tuileries, when he threatened me, after I had taken it into my head to write in the Mercury:

*'He left to us the discovery, at the end of the Adriatic, of the grave of two royal daughters whose funeral oration we heard pronounced in an attic in London. Oh, the grave that contains those noble ladies will have found its silence broken once at least; the sound of a Frenchman's footsteps will have made two Frenchwomen stir in their coffins! Respects paid by a poor gentleman, at Versailles, would have meant nothing to the Princesses; the prayer of a Christian, on foreign soil, will perhaps have proved agreeable to the saints.'*

It seems to me I have served the Bourbons for years: they have scouted my loyalty, but they never tire of it. I breakfast on the Quay of Slav(e)s, while waiting for the exile.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 12

Rousseau and Byron

Venice, September 1833.

From my little table my eyes roaming over the whole harbor: a sea-breeze refreshes the air; the tide rises; a three-master enters. The Lido on one side, the Doge's palace on the other, the Lagoon between, such is the picture. From this port so many glorious fleets have sailed: old Dandolo embarked with all the pomp of naval chivalry, of which Villehardouin, who initiates our language and our memoirs, has left this description:

*'Et quand les nef's furent chargiées d'armes....And when the ships were filled with weapons, provisions, knights, and sergeants, the shields were ranged round the bulwarks and castles of the ships, and the banners displayed, many and fair...Never did finer fleet sail from any port.'*

My morning scene in Venice brought to mind the story of Captain Olivet and Zulietta, so well recounted:

*'The gondola,' says Rousseau, 'reached the ship's side, and I saw a dazzling young person come aboard, very lightly and coquettishly dressed, who was in the cabin in three steps; and I saw her seated beside me before I had noticed they had set a cover for her. She was as charming as she was lively, a brunette, not more than twenty years of age. She spoke only Italian, and her accent alone was sufficient to turn my head. As she ate and chattered she glanced at me, gazed at me fixedly a moment, and then exclaimed, "Blessed Virgin! Ah, my dear Bremond, what an age it is since I saw you!" Then she threw herself into my arms, pressed her lips to mine, and clasped me almost to strangling. Her large black oriental eyes sent fiery shafts into my heart, and although the surprise at first stupefied me, voluptuousness made rapid progress within....she said I resembled Monsieur de Bremond, Director of the Tuscan Customs, to such a degree as to be mistaken for him; that she had turned this Monsieur de Bremond's head, and would do it again; that she had quit him because he was a fool; that she took me in his place; that she would love me because it pleased her so to do, for which reason I must love her as long as it was agreeable to her, and when she thought it proper to send me about my business, I must be as patient as her dear Bremond had been. No sooner said than done...In the evening we conducted her to her apartments. As we conversed, I saw a couple of pistols on her dressing-table. "Aha!" I said, lifting one of them, "this is a handkerchief box, of a new design: may I ask what its use is?" ...She said to us, with a naivety which rendered her still more charming: "When I am indulgent to persons whom I do not love, I make them pay for the boredom they cause me; nothing could be more just; but though I suffer their caresses, I will not bear their insults; nor fail to shoot the first who shall be wanting in respect to me.'*

*On taking leave of her, I made another appointment for the next day. I did not keep her waiting I found her in vestito di confidenza, in an undress more than wanton, only known in southern countries, which I will not amuse myself in describing, though I recollect it perfectly well....I had no idea of the transports which awaited me. I have spoken of Madame de Larnage with the delight which the remembrance of her still sometimes brings me; but how old, ugly and cold she appeared, compared with my Zulietta! Do not attempt to imagine the charms and graces of that enchanting girl, you will fall far short of the truth: young virgins in cloisters are not so fresh: the beauties of the seraglio are less lively: the houris of paradise less engaging.'*



The adventure finishes with one of Rousseau's eccentricities, and Zuietta's phrase: *Lascia le donne e studia la matematica: leave off women and take up mathematics.*

Lord Byron also indulged in paid Venuses: he filled the Mocenigo Palace with Venetian beauties *taking refuge*, according to him, beneath their *fazzioli* (head-scarves). Sometimes, troubled by shame, he fled, and spent the night on the water in his gondola. As his favorite *Sultana* he had Margarita Cogni, called, from her husband's occupation, *La Fornarina* (the Baker's wife): 'Very dark, tall,' (as Lord Byron says) 'the Venetian face, very fine black eyes....she was two and twenty years old...In the autumn, one day, going to the Lido...we were overtaken by a heavy Squall...On our return, after a tight struggle, I found her on the open steps of the Mocenigo palace, on the Grand Canal, with her great black eyes flashing through her tears, and the long dark hair, which was streaming drenched with rain over her brows and breast. She was perfectly exposed to the storm; and the wind blowing her hair and dress about her thin figure, and the lightning flashing round her, with the waves rolling at her feet, made her look like Medea alighted from her chariot, or the Sibyl of the tempest that was rolling around her, the only living thing within hail at that moment except ourselves. On seeing me safe, she did not wait to greet me, as might be expected, but called out to me "Ah! can' della Madonna, e esto il tempo per andar' al' Lido? (Ah! Dog of the Virgin, is this a time to go to the Lido?)..."'

In these two recitals by Rousseau and Byron, one feels the difference in social position, education and character of the two men. Through the delightful style of the author of the *Confessions*, something vulgar and cynical appears, and in very poor taste; the obscenity of expression obtaining to that epoch further spoils the picture. *Zuietta* is superior to her lover in the nobility of her feelings and her elegance of dress; she is almost like a great lady having an affair with the mean little secretary of a minor ambassador. The same inferiority is there again when Rousseau arranges with his friend Carrio, to raise, at joint expense, a little girl of eleven whose favors or rather tears they wish to share.

Lord Byron has a different allure: he forgoes the manners and conceits of the aristocracy; a Peer of Great Britain, enjoying himself with a commoner he has seduced, he raises her to his level by his caresses and the magic of his talent. Byron arrived in Venice rich and famous, Rousseau disembarked there poor and unknown; everyone knows the Palazzo that reveals the errors of the celebrated English Commodore's noble heir; no guide can show you the house where the plebeian son of an obscure Genevan watchmaker concealed his pleasures. Rousseau does not even speak of Venice; he seems to have lived there without seeing her: Byron has sung her admirably.

You have read what I have said in these *Memoirs* about the connections in imagination and destiny which seem to have existed between René's storyteller and Childe-Harold's bard. Here I again mention one of those similarities so flattering to my pride. Is not *La Fornarina*, Lord Byron's brunette, of the same family as the blonde Velléda of Les Martyrs, her elder sister?

*'Concealed among the rocks, I waited awhile without seeing a thing. Suddenly my ear was struck by sounds carried on the breeze from the midst of the lake. I listened and made out the accents of a human voice; at the same moment I saw a frail craft suspended on the summit of a breaker; it fell, disappeared between two waves, and then revealed itself again on the crest of a watery mass; it approached the shore. A woman sailed it; she chanted while fighting the storm, seeming to delight in the winds: one might have said they were in her power, so readily did she seem to challenge them. I saw her throwing lengths of*

*cloth, fleeces, blocks of wax, and little bars of gold and silver into the lake, one after the other, as sacrificial offerings.*

*Soon she reached the shore, leapt from her boat, moored it to a willow-branch, and plunged into the trees, using the poplar-wood oar she clasped in her hand as an aid. She passed quite close to me without seeing me. She was of great height; her tunic was black, sleeveless and short, scarcely serving to hide her nakedness. She wore a golden sickle suspended from a bronze belt, and was crowned with a chaplet of oak leaves. The whiteness of her face and arms, her blue eyes and reddened lips, her long blond hair, floating wild, proclaimed her a daughter of Gaul, and by their beauty contrasted with her proud and savage advance. She chanted dire words in a melodious voice, and her naked breast rose and fell like the foam of the waves.'*

I would be embarrassed at setting myself alongside Byron and Jean-Jacques, without knowing what the place granted to me by posterity will be, were these *Memoirs* to appear during my lifetime; but by the time they see the light of day I will have passed forever, like my illustrious predecessors, to a foreign shore; my shade will bow to the breath of public opinion, as powerless and slight as the little that will remain of my ashes.

Rousseau and Byron in Venice resembled each other in one respect: neither appreciated the arts. Rousseau, marvelously gifted at music, has the air of not knowing pictures, statues and monuments exist beside *Zulietta*; and yet how charmingly those masterpieces suit love whose object they deify and whose flame they augment! As for Lord Byron, he is *disgusted* with the *infernal glare* of Rubens' colors; he *spits upon* all the sacred subjects that the churches disgorge; he never saw a picture or a statue which came within a league of his conception. He prefers to these artistic impostures the beauty of mountains, seas, horses, a certain lion in the Morea, and a tiger at supper in *Exeter Change*. Is that not all a little one-sided?

*What affectation and braggadocio!*

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 13

Great Geniuses inspired by Venice – Courtesans ancient and modern –  
Rousseau and Byron born to be unhappy

*Venice, the 10th to the 17th of September 1833.*

[This chapter and the following chapters of Book XXXIX contain material excised from Chateaubriand's 1846 revisions]

What then is this city where the greatest intellects arranged to meet? I experience indescribable pleasure in viewing the masterpieces of the great masters once more in the very places they were designed for. I breathe more easily amidst the immortal choir, like a humble traveller admitted to the heart of a rich and handsome family. Some have visited her themselves; others have sent their *Muses* here. Something would have been lacking to the immortality of their genius, if they had not hung their paintings in this temple of voluptuousness and glory.

Without even mentioning the great poets of Italy, the geniuses of all Europe have set their creations here: here Shakespeare's *Desdemona*, so different from Rousseau's *Zulietta* and Byron's *Margarita*, breathed, that modest Venetian who declared her tenderness for *Othello*: '*If you have a friend who loves me, teach him how to tell your story, and that will woo me.*' There Otway's *Belvidera* appears, she who tells *Jaffeur*:

*'O smile, as when our loves were in their spring....*

*O lead me to some desert wide and wild,  
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul  
May have its vent: where I may tell aloud  
To the high heavens, and ever list'ning planet,  
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught!  
Where I may throw my eager arms about thee,  
Give loose to love with kisses, kindling joy,  
And let off all the fire that's in my heart.'*

In our day, Goethe has celebrated Venice, and '*le gentil*' Marot, who, first to lend his voice to the awakening of the French Muses, took refuge at Titian's hearth. Montesquieu wrote: '*One can have seen all the cities of the world and still be amazed on arrival in Venice.*'

When, in too explicit a picture, the author of the *Persian Letters* describes a Muslim girl given over to the attentions of two *men of divine nature* in paradise, does he not appear to have described the courtesan of Rousseau's *Confessions* and she of Byron's letter? Was not I, between my two Floridians, like Anais between her two angels? But the painted ladies and I, we were not immortals.

Madame de Staël delivered Venice up to Corinne's inspiration: the latter hears the sound of cannon fire proclaiming a young girl's obscure sacrifice...solemn notice '*that a resigned woman gives to all women who still struggle against destiny.*' *Corinne* climbs to the summit of the Campanile, contemplates the city and the waves, turns her gaze on the clouds towards Greece: '*In the darkness, she saw only the reflection of the lanterns that light the gondolas: one might have thought them shades gliding over the water, guided by a little star.*' *Oswald* departs; *Corinne* rushes out to summon him back. '*A terrible rainstorm*

*then commenced: the most violent of winds was heard.’ Corinne descends to the canal bank. ‘The night was so dark there was not a single boat; Corinne called at random to the boatmen who took her cries for the cries of distress of some unfortunate drowning in the midst of the storm, and yet no one dared draw near, so tumultuous were the waves stirring the Grand Canal.’*

Here again is Byron’s *Margarita*.

Lord Byron indeed considered *La Fornarina* among the women whose beauty resembled that of the tiger at supper: what then if he and Rousseau had seen the courtesans of ancient Venice and not their degenerate descendants? Montaigne who never hides anything, says that it seemed as ‘*admirable as anything else, to see such a number of them, perhaps a hundred and fifty or thereabouts, throwing money away on the clothes and trappings of princesses, and having no other funds to maintain themselves than that traffic of theirs.*’

When the French took Venice they forbade the courtesans from placing the little light in their windows that Hero used to guide *Leander*. The Austrians have suppressed the *Benemerite meretrici*: *meritorious whores* tolerated by the Venetian Senate, *en masse*. Today they simply resemble the vagabond creatures of our own city streets.

A few steps from my inn is a house, on whose gate three or four quite pretty and half-naked beauties swing, by way of a sign. A corporal on his *beat* sticking close to the wall, his arms extended, the palms of both hands pressed against the outside of his thighs, his chest flat, his neck rigid, his gaze fixed, turning his head neither to right nor left, is on duty before these Young Ladies who mock him, and try to make him violate his trust. He sees the *Pourchois* (Bourgeois) enter and leave, proclaiming by his presence that all must pass by without noise or scandal: no one is yet of the opinion in France that we should put the obedience of our own conscripts to this test.

Let us pity Rousseau and Byron for having burnt incense on altars unworthy of their sacrifice. Misers perhaps of their time whose every minute belonged to the world, they only desired pleasure, charging their genius with transforming it into passion and glory. For their lyres the melancholy, the jealousy, the sadness of love; for themselves its voluptuousness and slumber beneath gentle hands. They sought dreams, unhappiness, tears, despair among wildernesses, winds, shadows, storms, forests and oceans, and composed, for their readers, the torments of Childe-Harold and Saint-Preux on the breast of their *Zulietta* and *Margarita*.

Whatever the case, in the moment of intoxication, the illusion of love was fulfilled for them. Moreover they knew that they clasped faithlessness itself in their arms; that she would vanish with the dawn: she did not deceive them with a false semblance of constancy; she did not condemn herself to follow them, wearied of their tenderness or her own. All in all, Jean-Jacques and Lord Byron were unfortunate men; it was a condition of their genius: the former was maddened; while the latter, fatigued by his excesses and in need of esteem, returned to the shores of Greece where his *Muse* and Death served him well, in turn.

‘Glory and Greece around *us* see!

.....

The land of honourable death

Is here: – up to the field, and give  
Away thy breath!’

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 14

Zanze

*Venice, the 10th to the 17th of September 1833.*

As I was making all these notes in pencil, while breakfasting in a leisurely manner at my little table, a policeman hovered round me: he doubtless recognized me, but did not dare speak. Detested by Kings whose humble, but not very obedient, servant I have had the honor to be, I represent to them the freedom of the Press incarnate.

Hyacinthe rejoined me at the café and informed me of the success of his investigations regarding Zanze. The latter's father, Brollo, the gaoler, had died some years previously; Zanze's mother lodged in the Cicognara Palace behind the Accademia di Belle Arti, which she rented from the owner and in which she sub-let rooms to artists, clerks and officers of the garrison. Brollo's widow had two sons: one, Angelo, worked for a manufacturer of mosaics, the other, Antonio, ran the shop for a cheese-seller; Zanze had married; she and her husband, who was employed at *La Centrale*, lived with her mother: she worked on mosaics and embroidery.

Matters having reached this point, I decided to visit Madame Brollo. I went to meet Angelo at the inn, and we left in a gondola.

The gaoler's wife received me at her door in the alley. We climbed a stair: Madame Brollo went in front, as if she were conducting me to prison, begging my pardon for leading me through the kitchen first. Zanze was at the *Accademia* with a pupil, and had taken the key of her room with her; but Madame Brollo, seeing a second key hanging from a nail, hastened to open her daughter's apartment.

The room was large, lit by two windows. The furniture comprised a six-foot long bed without curtains, a table and a few chairs.

The august widow took from the wall a portrait of Francis II, done in glass beads; Zanze's work: I presented myself as an amateur interested in mosaics. Antonio was dispatched as messenger to the creator of the portrait.

Left alone with Madame Antonia Brollo, we began an animated conversation. Madame Antonia had been twice married; her first husband, Jean Olagnon, from Picardy, had died in the Army of Egypt. Madame Antonia spoke French, and even pronounced it quite well, though she had difficulty remembering the words: so she mostly used the Italian language mixed with Venetian dialect. Here is Pellico's description of the *Carceriere*: *'La moglie era quella che più manteneva il contegno ed il carattere di carceriere. Era una donna di viso asciutto, asciutto, verso i quarant' anni, di parole asciutte, asciutte, no dante il minimo segno d'essere capace di qualche benevolenza ad altri che a suoi figli: the wife was the person who best supported the character or behavior of a gaoler. She was a woman with a sour, sour face about forty years of age, curt, very curt in speech, giving not the least sign of a capacity for kindness to anyone except her children.'*

Madame Antonia must have altered in six years. Here is a fresh description:

A small woman with a very common air; a rounded figure; a florid complexion; wearing nothing on her greying hair; appearing very grasping and deeply concerned about her family's means of sustenance.

When we had sat down together, she seized my hand which she clasped and wanted to kiss; I drew my hand away modestly, and said:

‘– *Madame Antonia, you knew Monsieur Silvio Pellico?*’

‘– *Signor, si; un carbonaro; tutti carbonari!*’

‘– *You would take him his coffee during the day, and your daughter often replaced you?*’

‘– *Vero, la sua Eccellenza.*’

‘– *Have you another daughter?*’

‘– *No, Sir; only the one.*’

‘– *Who is called Zanze?*’

‘– *Signor, si, and due sons.*’

‘– *Just so. And your daughter served Monsieur Silvio Pellico ably?*’

‘– *Signor, si: tutti dottori, canonici, nobili (all the scholars, canons, noblemen). When they were condemned, O Dio! I lit a candle, thick as that, to Nostra Dama di Pietà.*’

At this point, Madame Antonia told me that, after the sentence, they had put her, her husband and all her family *nella strada* (on the street), with twenty *sous* in their purse; that she had requested, demanded a pension, threatened to write to the Emperor, and at last obtained a hundred *écus* with the aid of which she had raised her children.

Antonio arrived with Zanze.

I found the girl was even smaller than her mother, seven or eight months pregnant, her dark hair plaited, a gold chain round her neck, her shoulders bare and very shapely, her eyes large and grey in color and *di pietosi sguardi* (with a kind expression), a slender nose, a slender physiognomy, a thin face, a refined smile, but the teeth less white than other Venetian women, the colorings pale rather than white, the skin without translucency, but also without freckles.

Antonio became the general interpreter of the conversation.

I told Zanze that as an admirer of Monsieur Pellico I had wished to meet the lady who was so kind to the poor prisoner.

Zanze seized my hand as her mother had, and, for some reason, I did not withdraw my hand. Zanze seemed to search her memory a moment for the name I had just pronounced; then: ‘*Yes, yes, Monsieur Pellico; I remember him; a Carbonaro!*’

‘– *Do you know he has written a book about his prisons and that he speaks of you?*’

‘– *No I did not.*’

Old Antonio, who knew everything about it, was less reticent, and with a very droll smile, said:

‘– *But, Zanze, you told him you were in love.*’

SIORA ZANZE

‘*What! Inamorata! Invaghita! (In love!) Ah! I went to school; I was just a little girl! I was only twelve.*’

ANTONIO

‘*Corpo di Christo! At twelve everyone in Venice is deeply in love.*’

SIORA ANTONIA

‘*You were fourteen, Zanze; you were in love: it’s true.*’

SIORA ZANZE

‘*It’s not true; I was never in love till I went to the country, because I was ill. I was in love then, with my cousin.*’

‘– *And you married your cousin?*’ I asked.

‘– *No, Eccellenza: I did not marry my cousin.*’

I laughed. Madame Antonia had explained that Brollo, learning that the prisoners would probably be condemned, had sent the children to the country.

I continued: ‘– *Perhaps there was another Zanze in the prison? Perhaps you are not the Zanze who took Monsieur Pellico his coffee?*’

‘– *Yes, yes. There was no other Zanze in the prison but me. The daughter of the secondino was called... (I forget the name): there was an old woman too.*’

Zanze took my hand again in hers, and started to tell me in detail the history of her study of mosaics. She grew more attractive the more she spoke. Pellico described the charm of what he called his little gaoler’s ugliness, *bruttina: graziose, adulazioncelle, venezianina adolescente sbirra; ugly, but gracious, a little flatterer a little adolescent Venetian gaoler*. Zanze, according to her own mother’s calculation, was twenty-four; she was fourteen when she confided the anxieties of her tender years to the author of *Francesca da Rimini*. In those days she did not have three children and was not pregnant with a fourth. Zanze told me that two of her children were dead and that she only had one left. ‘*What of the fourth, then?*’ I asked. Zanze laughed, and looking down at her large belly, said: *stimo costui: I treasure it.*

Antonio, speaking to me in French, said: ‘*She will never admit her confession to Pellico; but it’s certainly true.*’



– ‘*I am not seeking to find out Zanze’s secret,*’ I replied, ‘*and if you had not spoken to her about the affair then I would never have said a word. Now ask Zanze if she wants me to bring her a copy of Le Mie Prigioni; she can read it, and tell me if she recalls things she may have forgotten.*’ – Zanze agreed to the proposal; but she suggested I not bring the book until after her husband had returned from his office. ‘– *My husband,*’ she added, ‘*is a year younger than me.*’

That is the point we have reached: I ought to return to buy a few of Zanze’s little efforts. She accompanied me to the door onto the alley (*calle*) with her mother. The elder, not losing sight of her object, invited me to *ritornare*. Zanze was more reserved.

Such is the power of talent: Pellico lent his little *bruttina* consoler, who chased the flies away with her fan so effectively, a charm she perhaps did not possess. Siore Zanze seems an angel of love when, after kissing a verse from the Bible, she says to the prisoner: ‘*Every time you read this passage, I want you to remember I placed a kiss there.*’ She is irresistibly seductive when Pellico, encircled by her dear arms, *dalle sue care braccia*, without pressing her to him, without kissing her, stammers: ‘*Vi prego, Zanze, non m’abbracciate mai; cio non va bene: Go Zanze, please, don’t ever embrace me; it wouldn’t be right.*’

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 15

Madame Mocenigo – Count Cicognara – A bust of Madame Récamier

*Venice, the 10th to the 17th of September 1833.*

I had met by chance, in Paris under the Empire, Madame Mocenigo whose ancestors were seven times honored by being made Doge. Bonaparte, in order to regenerate Italy, forced the great transalpine families to hand over their children to him. Madame Mocenigo, caught up in those general measures, prepared her two little *Doges*, on Mont Sainte-Geneviève, for the Imperial military service. It was no longer an age when Venice could force an Emperor to bow before her, in order to obtain one of her son's freedom.

Madame Mocenigo, having learnt of my presence in her native city, was obliging enough as to wish to see me. I took myself to the great Lady's house on leaving my rendezvous with the little *Soria*.

The poet of modern Albion has blessed one of the three Mocenigo Palaces with his presence. A signpost planted in the Grand Canal indicates to the passer-by Byron's former residence. One is less moved at seeing the noble lord's half-effaced coat of arms on this signpost, than one would be on seeing his broken lyre hanging there.

Madame Mocenigo lived tucked away in a small corner of her Louvre whose vastness dwarfed her, and whose deserted part every day gained a little more on the inhabited part. I found her sitting facing an original painting by Tintoretto, of the Glory of Paradise. Her portrait (that of Madame Mocenigo) painted in her youth (a first and authentic proof of her beauty) hung on the wall before her: a View of Venice, by Canaletto, in his earlier style, made a pendant to a weaker *View of Venice* by Bonington.

Though Madame Mocenigo is still beautiful, it is as though she were in the shadow of her years. I overwhelmed her with compliments which she returned; we were both lying, and knew it well. '*Madame, you are younger than ever.*' – '*Monsieur, you never age.*' We took to lamenting the ruinous state of Venice, in order to avoid speaking about ourselves; we placed to the Republic's account all the complaints we made regarding time, all our regrets for past days. I kissed, respectfully, on leaving, the hand of that daughter of the Doges; but I glanced at the other beautiful hand of the portrait which seemed to have withered beneath my lips: when the plebeian Zanze's hand pressed mine, I was not aware of any transformation.

Monsieur Gamba, my learned patron, accompanied me to Count Cicognara's. The Count is a tall man of handsome appearance; but reduced by consumption to a frightening degree of thinness. He rose, painfully, from his armchair to greet me and said: '*So I have seen you before I die!*'

– '*Monsieur,*' I replied, '*you anticipate me; I was going to say precisely the same thing to you as you have said to me: it is probable that I will go first. I am happy to meet a man who has given life to Venice, as much as one can rekindle these illustrious ashes.*'

Madame Cicognara was there, and wished to stop her husband talking too much; her tender efforts were in vain. For the first time since I had crossed the Alps, I talked politics; we moaned about the state of Italy. We then fell into a conversation on the arts; I congratulated Monsieur Cicognara on his discovery

of Titian's Assumption: the priest who had abandoned the painting, without realizing its merit, later wished to initiate proceedings against the knowledgeable amateur: the business has been settled.

I knew of Monsieur Cicognara's exceptional admiration for Canova: I thought I ought to mention the urn in the Accademia which contains the sculptor's hand even though that butchery, the cutting up of a human body, that materialistic adoration of a skeletal claw was abominable to me. You find Canova's bust in the hostelrys and even the cottages of peasants in Venetian Lombardy. We are a long way from sharing that taste for the arts and that kind of national pride. If we possess talented men we rush to deprecate them: it seems as if we are being robbed of admiration. We cannot endure anyone acquiring reputation; our vanity takes umbrage at everything; everyone rejoices inwardly when a man of worth dies: that's one rival less; his irksome fame prevents that of fools being recognized, and the flock crows over mediocrities. They rush to dissect the illustrious deceased in three or four newspaper articles; then cease to talk of him; no one opens his works; they thrust his fame back into his books, as they seal his corpse in its coffin, dispatching the whole lot into Eternity, with the help of death and time. I will leave, for those who survive me, my own obituary notice written in advance, such as I remember having read in Pierre de l'Estoile's journal: *'this Thursday....the good Dufour was interred...he made a trip to Jerusalem, and was none the wiser for it.'*

At Madame Albrizzi's I saw Canova's Leda; while at Count Cicognara's I admired the Beatrice of that Italian Praxiteles. Monsieur Artaud in his translation of Dante and my excellent friend Monsieur Ballanche his *Essays on Palingenesis*, tell of what inspired the sculptor:

*'An artist of great renown,' says the philosopher of Christianity, 'a sculptor who had previously brought so much glory to Dante's illustrious homeland, and whose refined imagination had so often been stirred by the masterworks of antiquity, saw one day, for the first time, a woman who seemed to him the living embodiment of Beatrice. Full of that religious emotion which prompts genius, he immediately demanded that the marble, obedient as ever to his chisel, express the sudden inspiration of the moment, and Dante's Beatrice passed from the vague domain of poetry to the actualized domain of the arts. The feeling that resides in that harmonious physiognomy has now become a new instance of pure and virginal beauty that, in its turn, inspires both artists and poets.'*

Canova sculpted three admirable busts of Beatrice modelled on Madame Récamier: the one he presented to his model, as a portrait from life, wears a crown of olive leaves. The great artist, acknowledging both the woman and the poet, wrote these lines of Dante's, with his own hand, on the note to Madame Récamier dispatched with it:

*'Sovra candido velo cinta d'oliva  
donna m'apparve...*

*A lady appeared to me, crowned with olive,  
over her white veil...*

I was deeply moved by that homage of genius to one whose caring friendship will endure in these *Memoirs*. If she appeared to Canova in *her white veil*, she appeared to me, in a further citation:

*'...dentro una nuvola di fiori  
Che dalle mani angeliche saliva.*

*...within a cloud of flowers  
that rose from out angelic hands.'*

I trace in turn these few words on the bust's plinth, regretting that Heaven did not endow me with Canova's chisel, or Dante's lyre.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 16

A *Soirée* at Madame Albrizzi's – Lord Byron according to Madame Albrizzi

Venice, the 10th to the 17th of September 1833.

After dinner I dressed in order to spend the evening at the home of Madame Teotochi Albrizzi, the spiritual author of the *Ritratti* so warmly praised by Monsieur Denon at a time when my name was scarcely known among travellers. Monsieur Gamba had resolved to present me to the celebrated Signora. I was annoyed: to go out at nine in the evening, at the hour when I go to bed, that is, when I go late! But what does one not do for Venice?

Madame Albrizzi is a pleasant elderly lady, of an imaginative countenance. I found a crowd of men at her salon, almost all of them professors and scholars. Among the women, there was a newly married lady rather beautiful; but too grand, a Venetian of ancient family, with a pale face and dark eyes, a somewhat mocking and sulky air, in all quite caustic; and she lacked the most seductive of graces, she never smiled. Another woman with a kind appearance scared me less; I dared to chat to her. She had travelled in Switzerland, and had been to Florence; she was ashamed never to have visited Rome. '*But you know, we Italians remain where we are.*' One might well have remained with her.

Madame Albrizzi told me all about Lord Byron; she was the more infatuated with him, because he had come to her *soirées*. His Lordship spoke to neither the English nor French, but exchanged a few words with the Venetians and only them. His Lordship was never seen walking in St. Mark's Square, because of his lameness. Madame Albrizzi claimed that when he entered her rooms, he had a certain trick of walking by means of which he concealed his limp. Decidedly he was a fine swimmer. He had given Madame Albrizzi a portrait of himself. In the miniature, *Childe Harold* is charming, quite young, or quite rejuvenated; he displays a naïve and childlike character. Nature perhaps made him thus; then a disposition born of some misfortune, seizing hold of his spirit, produced the famous Byron. Madame Albrizzi affirms that in moments of intimacy one found in him the man portrayed in his works. He considered himself scorned by his nation and for that reason detested it: he lacked esteem with the Venetian people because of his wild behavior.

Canova gave Madame Albrizzi, Greek by birth, a bust of Helen: I was shown it by torchlight.

Madame Albrizzi had seen me, she said, in the amphitheater of Verona and claimed to have picked me out amidst the Kings. I was so stunned by so fine a compliment that I departed at eleven to the great amazement of the Venetians. It was high time; sleep was overcoming me and I had exhausted my wit: one must never spend one's last idea or one's last franc. Speaking of francs, Law died and was buried in Venice: I felt like going and asking him for some of those excellent bank-notes to fund the Legitimacy and a land-concession for myself among the Natchez.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 17

A *Soirée* at Madame Benzoni's – Lord Byron according to Madame Benzoni

*Venice, the 10th to the 17th of September 1833.*

If people knew what I suffered in salons, charitable souls would never do me the honor of inviting me to one. One of the cruel torments of my past grandeur was to receive and make visits, to go to Court, give balls, dinners, talk and smile while dying of ennui, be polite and amused by the sweat of my brow: there were the true and only anxieties resulting from my ambition. Every time I fell from the heights of fortune, I experienced inexpressible joy at returning to my poverty and my solitude, throwing away my lace, medals, and ribbons, donning my old frock coat, and resuming my poetic walks, in wind and rain, along the Seine towards Charenton or Saint-Cloud. Having spent an evening at Madame Albrizzi's, I could not avoid another at Countess Benzoni's. At ten I arrived in my gondola, like a corpse being carried to St Christopher's.

Madame Benzoni has merited her reputation for beauty; her hands served as a model for Canova; she is the heroine of *La Biondina in gondoledda*. She made me sit beside her on a sofa. Various ladies arrived in succession: a host of men pressed around.

Those who know me can imagine whether I was at ease, exposed like the Blessed Sacrament to their gaze, fixed as it was on my divine rays. I am not godlike, and have no right to adoration, or love of incense. I begged Madame Benzoni, despite all the happiness I had in being near her, to allow me to give up the place I occupied so badly to one of the ladies: she would not countenance it. She went to find two or three interesting men: they had the goodness to come and exchange a few words with me, chained in captivity on my silk cushions, like a galley-slave on his bench.

A noble gentleman whom I had glimpsed at Madame Albrizzi's said: '*Ah, you are only pretending to be old! We shall no longer be fooled by what you write about yourself.*'

'– Sir,' I replied, '*you are doing me a disservice; to achieve glory in Venice one must be old. Of your hundred and twenty Doges more than fifty became famous at an age when other men lose their renown: Dandolo, blind, was ninety-five when he conquered Constantinople, Zeno eighty when he liberated Cyprus; Titian and Sansovino almost centenarians, died in the full flow of their talent. In accusing me of youth, you criticize my work.*'

Coffee was brought; I took some for appearance's sake. Madame Benzoni complimented me on my Venetian ways, and went off to find me some feminine companions.

During this time I remained alone in the center of my wretched ottoman, fascinated by and trembling beneath the gaze of a dark-haired lady with the half-closed eyes of a serpent; she seemed to draw me: I think there are magnetic women who attract one.

A blonde lady, in the *springtime* of her years, rose gracefully, making the sound of a flower stirring; she advanced and leaned her face of dazzling freshness towards me; she was all curiosity, all mystery: one might have thought her a rose bending under the weight of its perfumes and secrets.

In Venice they sell secrets of that sort to make oneself desirable; I would have liked to buy one, but a story which I remembered made me uneasy: a Neapolitan fell in love with a French girl who owned a goat; being unable to move her heart, he had recourse to a philtre: unfortunately he erred in his mixture of ingredients and magic words, and behold the goat came running, capering and bounding about, leaping at his neck, and giving him a thousand caresses. The charm had acted on the poor maddened beast!

Madame Benzoni returned; she had addressed herself to the various beautiful women in the room; she had invited them to sit with the stranger; they had all replied: *'We dare not.'* If they had known how frightened I was of them, they would have dared.

*'You defend yourself in vain,'* my gracious hostess said, *'we will force Eudore to love a Venetian; we desire to oust those beautiful Roman ladies.'* – *'Madame,'* I replied, *'it is indeed at your house that people fall in love.'* (Lord Byron met Madame Guiccioli there.) *'As for my beautiful Romans, as you are pleased to call them, I am merely an ex-ambassador. It is very easy doubtless to be seduced by your delightful compatriots; but I have passed the age for seduction. One should only make promises when one is young enough to keep them.'*

The dark-haired lady listened to our conversation; the rose paid attention with her eyes.

Countess Benzoni spoke about Lord Byron to me in a different manner to Madame Albrizzi. She expressed herself with rancor: *'He placed himself in a corner because he had a twisted foot. He had quite a good face; but the rest of his person scarcely matched. He was an actor, not behaving as others do, so that they would notice him, never letting himself be lost sight of, posing incessantly, always for effect, even when eating Zucca Arrostita (roast pumpkin).'* The moral aspect of the man was still more badly mauled. I took up the defence of *Childe Harold*: *'Madame, I see that he is far from being a friend of yours; you are, it seems to me, a little harsh in your judgement. An affectation of eccentricity, singularity, and originality, belongs to the English character in general. Lord Byron may have paid for his genius with a few weaknesses; but posterity will be little concerned with those unfortunate matters, or rather will ignore them completely. The poet will mask the man; he will interpose his talent between himself and future generations, and through that divine veil, posterity will only see the god.'*

Madame Benzoni boasted of having spoken that morning with a Frenchman who knew me *very well*, and had told her all my history; she would not tell me his name. Living alone, confiding my affairs to no one, I did not see how anyone could know me *very well*: through the biographies of me? Some, while kindly, swarm with errors; others, malevolent, are full of absurd anecdotes. It seemed however that Madame Benzoni's Frenchman was not an enemy.

At midnight I retired, despite my hostess's insistence and the beseeching air of the dark-haired lady with the eyes of a serpent. My gondola, silent and solitary, bore me along the Grand Canal to the Hôtel de l'Europe: no light shone from the windows of the Palazzi whose enchantments Madame Benzoni had shut away along with her youth: those dilapidated palaces were ending their lives when the *Bionda's* first adventures began. (Mesdames Albrizzi and Benzoni are no more; thus I saw the end of the two last great Venetian ladies. What has become of Lord Byron himself? You can see the place where he bathed: they set his name in the midst of the Grand Canal. Today they do not even know it. Venice is mute. The noble lord's coat of arms has vanished from the place where they displayed it. Austria has extended her blanket of silence: she has smitten the waters and all is dead. **Note:** Paris, 1841)

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 18

A gondola ride – Poetry – Catechism at St. Peter's – An aqueduct –  
A conversation with a fisher-girl – The Giudecca – Jewish women

*Venice, the 10th to the 17th of September 1833.*

On Sunday the 15th, the Patriarch, having been promoted to Cardinal, took the hat with all the usual ceremony. The bells rang, the city rejoiced; well-dressed women sat beneath the arcades of the cafés: *Florian's*, *Quadri's*, *Leoni's* and *Sutti's*: Monsieur Gamba assured me that they were assembled in such numbers in hopes of seeing me; that they had climbed on the benches and the bases of the columns of St. Mark's when the rumor spread that I was entering the Basilica; that I would meet the Venetian lady whose disdainful beauty had charmed me at Madame Albrizzi's.

I thought little of these tricks of Italian flattery, which nevertheless puffed up my vanity; but instinctive humility overcame my delusions of grandeur: Mr. Crow, instead of singing, was seized with terror; I hastened to flee from shyness, mistrust of myself, a horror of scenes, and a love of obscurity and silence. I hurled myself into a gondola and departed with Hyacinthe and Antonio, threading the labyrinth of least frequented canals.

Only the sound of our oars could be heard at the foot of the sonorous palaces, echoing all the more from their emptiness. Many of them, sealed for forty years, had seen not a soul enter: there, forgotten portraits hung, gazing at each other in silence through the darkness: if I had knocked, their subjects might have come to open the door, and asked me what I wanted, and why I was troubling their repose.

Full of memories of the poets, my thoughts elevated by the loves of yesterday, Saint Mark of Venice and Saint Anthony of Padua know the magnificent stories I dreamed then, while passing through the midst of the rats emerging from the marble. At the Bridge of Bianca Capello, I created a peerless romantic novel. Oh, how young, handsome, well-favored I was! But how many dangers too! A haughty and jealous family, State inquisitors, the *Bridge of Sighs* from which one heard lamentable cries! *'Let the galley-slaves make ready: let them row easily, and cleave the waves; bear us to the shores of Cyprus. Fair prisoner of palaces, the gondola awaits your beauty at the hidden sea-gate. Descend, adored girl! You whose blue eyes command the lily of your breast and the rose of your lips, as the azure heavens smile on the tinctures of spring.'*

All this led me to San Pietro, Venice's former cathedral. Little boys were repeating their catechism, interrogating each other under the direction of a priest. Their mothers and sisters, heads hidden in kerchiefs, stood listening. I gazed at them; I gazed at the painting by Alessandro Lazarini, representing San Lorenzo Giustiniani distributing his belongings to the poor. Since he was in the act of doing so, he might well have extended his good deed to us, the crowd of beggars cluttering up his church. Once I have spent the money set aside for my trip, what will I have left? And will those ragged young girls continue to sell the Levantines two kisses for five-pence?

From the eastern extremity of Venice I had myself rowed to the opposite extremity, *girando* (via a detour) by way of the Lagoon to the north. We passed close to the new island created by the Austrians, from gravel and piles of mud; it is on this emerging soil that they exercise the foreign troops who



oppress Venice's liberty: Cybele hidden in the breast of her son, Neptune, only emerges in order to betray him. I am not an Academician for nothing, and I know my Classics.

There was once a plan to link Venice to the mainland by a roadway. It astonishes me that the Republic at the height of its power did not think of bringing water to the city, by means of an aqueduct. An aerial canal running over the sea, through all the events of night and day, calm and storm, seeing the vessels pass beneath its arches, would have added its marvel to the city of marvels.

The western boundary of Venice is inhabited by the fishermen of the Lagoon; the end of the Riva delgi Schiavoni is the haunt of deep-sea fishermen; the former are the poorer: their shacks, like those of *Olpis* and *Asphalion* in Theocritus, have no other neighbor than the sea which bathes them.

There I might have nourished intrigue with *Checca* or *Orsetta*, from the comedy Le Baruffe Chiozzote: we hailed *una ragazza* (a little girl) who was wandering the shore. Antonio interpreted the tricky passages of dialogue.

‘– *Carina, do you want to cross to the Giudecca? We'll take you in our gondola.*’

‘– *Sior, no: vo a granzi: No, Sir: I am after crabs.*’

‘– *We can give you a better supper.*’

‘– *Col dona Mare: with my mother?*’

‘– *If you wish.*’

‘– *My mother is in the boat with my father.*’

‘– *Have you any sisters?*’

‘– *No.*’

‘– *Any brothers?*’

‘– *Uno: Tonino.*’

*Tonino*, aged between ten and twelve, appeared, wearing a red Greek skull-cap, dressed only in a shirt clinging tightly to his flanks; his bare feet, legs and thighs were bronzed by the sun: he was carrying a vessel filled with oil; he had the air of a young Triton. He placed his urn on the ground, and began listening to our conversation with his sister.

Soon a water-carrier arrived, whom I had already met by the cistern of the Ducal Palace: she was a brunette, lively and happy; she had a man's hat on her head, tilted to the back, and on the hat a bunch of flowers which, tangled with her hair, fell over her brow. Her right hand rested on the shoulder of a tall young man with whom she was laughing; she seemed to be saying to him, in the sight of God and the whole human race: ‘*I love you madly.*’

We continued to exchange remarks with the picturesque group. We spoke about marriage, love, feasts, dances, Christmas Mass, celebrated in the past by the Patriarch assisted by the Doge; we talked about the Carnival; we argued about kerchiefs, ribbons, fishing, nets, boats (*tartanes*), good or bad fortune at sea, the joys of Venice, though, except for Antonio, none of us had seen or known life under the Republic; so far had the past receded. That did not stop us saying with Goldoni: ‘*Semo donne da ben, e semo donne onorate; ma semo aliegre, e volemo saltare aliegre, e volemo ballare. E viva il Chiozzotti, e viva le Chiozzotte! We are good women, honourable women: but we're happy, and we want to stay happy, and dance, and leap...and Long live the Chiozzotti, Long live Chiozzotte!*’

In 1802 I dined on the *Quai de la Râpée* with Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant; the boatmen of Bercy have left no portrait of us: the fisher-folk of the Lagoon, and the sun of the Brenta, need a Léopold Robert. 'Do you know that land where the lemon-trees bloom' sings Mignon, the exile from Italy.' (Goethe).

The Giudecca, which we touched at, while returning, contains only a few poverty-stricken Jewish families. They are recognizable by their features. In their race the women seem much more handsome than the men, and seem to have escaped the maledictions to which their fathers, husbands and sons are subjected. There was no Jewess among the crowd of Priests, and others, who insulted the Son of Man, flagellated him, crowned him with thorns, and made him endure the ignominies and sorrows of the Cross. The women of Judea believed in the Saviour, loved him, followed him, aided him out of their goodness, and relieved his sufferings. A woman of Bethany, poured precious ointment over his head from an alabaster vase; the sinner anointed his feet with perfumed oil and wiped them with her hair. Christ in turn extended his grace and mercy to the Jewish women-folk: he resurrected the son of the widow of Nain, and Martha's brother; he healed Simon's mother-in-law, and the woman who touched the border of his garment; to the woman of Samaria he was a source of living water, a compassionate judge to the woman taken in adultery. The daughters of Jerusalem wept for him; the female saints accompanied him to Calvary, bought spice and ointments and sought the sepulchre weeping. '*Mulier quid ploras? Woman, why weepst thou?*' His first appearance after his glorious resurrection was to Mary Magdalene; she did not recognize him, but he said to her: '*Mary*'. At the sound of that voice her eyes were opened and she replied: '*Rabboni: Master*' Reflections of a beautiful light remain on the brows of Jewish women.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 19

Nine centuries of Venice seen from the Piazzetta – The decline and fall of Venice

*Venice, the 10th to the 17th of September 1833.*

Sunday was not yet over, and I was afraid to visit the great square and its three hundred beautiful women. Henri IV said of Catherine de Médici's Maids of Honor: '*I have never seen a more dangerous squadron.*' After dinner I ventured an exit *via* the stairs to the Piazzetta. The weather was equivocal; it rained at intervals; the wind authorized extra clothing. His Eminence, wrapped in a cloak, happily made his descent without being recognized. The grey sky seemed as if in mourning: I was struck more than ever by Venice's enslavement, while walking in front of the Austrian cannons, at the foot of the Ducal Palace.

Monsieur Gamba had suggested that if I wanted to see nine centuries of Venice's history at a glance, I should stand near the two large columns, in the place where the Piazzetta café borders the Lagoon. I read around me those chronicles in stone, written indeed by time and art.

*Eleventh century.*

Il Campanile, or the bell-tower of St. Mark: commenced by Nicolas Barattieri a Lombard architect.

*Twelfth century.*

The façade along one side of the Basilica of St Mark: architects unknown.

*Thirteenth century.*

The Ducal Palace: by Filippo Calendario, a Venetian.

*Fourteenth century.*

The Torre dell'Orologio: built by Piero Lombardi.

*Fifteenth century.*

The Procuratie Vecchie: by Bartholomeo Bono of Bergama.

*Sixteenth century.*

The Libreria (currently the Royal Palace) and the Zecca, or Mint: by Sansovino, a Florentine.

*Seventeenth century.*

The church of Santa Maria della Salute on the opposite side of the Grand Canal: the work of Baldassare Longhena.

*Eighteenth century.*

The Dogona di Mare: by Joseph Benoni.

*Nineteenth century.*

The *Café* or *Pavilion*, beside the gardens of the Royal Palace on the Lagoon: by a living architect, Professor Santi.

Venice begins with a bell-tower and ends with a café: via successive ages and masterpieces she has progressed from the Basilica of St. Mark to a coffee-house. Nothing bears greater witness to the genius of the past and the spirit of present times, the character of ancient society and the mode of modern society, than those two monuments; they give out their centuries.

Three *Venices*, the *Venetia* of the Romans, the *Venetia* of the Lagoon created by people escaping from the flail of God, Attila, and the *Venetia* or core Venice that superseded the other two; this latter Venice which Petrarch called *Aurea*, and whose stones were gilded and painted, according to Philippe de Comines; the Venice that possessed three Kingdoms, the Venice whose inland towns sufficed to win fame for Bonaparte's generals; that Republic perished not, as with so many other States, by a feat of French arms: attacked by mere threats, she succumbed without even making a stand.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Venice was all-powerful at sea, and in the fifteenth on land; she maintained power in the sixteenth, declined in the seventeenth and degenerated in the eighteenth, during which the old European order was eaten away and dissolved. The nobles of the Grand Canal became pharaoh's money-gatherers, and merchants, for the idle countryside of the Brenta. Venice merely lived on its Carnival, its Punchinellos, its courtesans and its spies: its Doge, a powerless old man, renewed his marriage with the adulterous Adriatic in vain. And yet the Republic was still not lacking in material assets.

When, in 1797, she allowed her continental territory to be invaded, there remained, as defence for her island possessions, 205 fortified buildings with 750 artillery pieces manned by 2,516 artillerymen; seven batteries and fortresses, 11,000 Dalmatian soldiers and 3,500 Italians; a population of 150,000 souls; and 800 ordinance pieces installed around the Lagoon. Out of effective range of cannon and incendiary device, Venice was the more impregnable in that she lacked ground from which to board her: the besiegers, only able to approach in boats, would have been exposed, on the narrow canals, to projectiles fired by the besieged ensconced in the houses, churches and waterside buildings. Master of St. Mark's Square, the Doge's Palace, the Arsenal, one would still be master of nothing. If Venice defended herself, she could be burnt but not taken; the inhabitants would have had a further safe refuge in their vessels. At such times the thought of national glory is truly powerful: indeed the shades of the Barbarigos, Pesaros, Zenos Morisini, and Loredanos, re-peopling their imperiled hearths and fighting from the windows of their palaces, would not be idle shades.

Venice, in 1797, besides the forces I have just enumerated, had money to swell them, and credit greater than her reserves. England, at war with us, would have hastened to supply her with soldiers and ships; Austria which sought her alliance, could have landed 10,000 Hungarian grenadiers from the harbors of Fiume and Trieste. Would the Directory, incapable of seizing a reef on the Normandy coast defended by a handful of English marines, have been able to take a Venice fully armed and protected by her vessels? The French only had 300 men and a single small-caliber artillery piece at Malghera; they even lacked boats.

Venice was not possessed of all these means of defence in 1700, when Addison found it already impregnable: *'it has neither rocks nor fortifications near it, and yet is, perhaps, the most impregnable town in Europe.'* he remarked that on the landward side one could not reach it across the ice as in Holland, and on the Adriatic side the entrance to the port is narrow, the navigable canals difficult to explore; that at the approach of an enemy fleet they would hasten to free the buoys that mark out those canals. If one assumed a rigorous blockade by land and sea, Addison goes on to say, the Venetians could still defend themselves against all except famine; even the latter would be greatly mitigated by the shoals of fish with which the waters abound and which the city's island inhabitants catch even *'in the midst of their very streets.'*

Well! A few contemptuous lines from Bonaparte's hand sufficed to overthrow the ancient city ruled by one of those *fearful magistracies* which, according to Montesquieu, *returned the State forcibly to Liberty*. Those trembling magistrates, once so firm, complied with the injunctions in the note written on a drumhead. The Senate was not convened; the *Signoria* wept, betrayed and dismayed; Ludovico Manin, the one hundred and twentieth, and last, Doge, in the midst of sobs and tears, offered to abdicate, in a tremulous voice; the Dalmatians were dismissed, the ships withdrawn. On the 12th of May 1797, the Grand Council adopted *the representative system of provisional government*, in order to meet Bonaparte's wishes, *s'empreché con questo, s'incontrino i desiderii del general medesimo*. The enslavement of the Republic, victorious for centuries, Dandolo's immortal country, was achieved not on the field of battle, or in the negotiations of some new League of Cambrai, but in Venice itself, by an obscure embassy secretary, who has since died in the madhouse at Charenton.

Four days after the Council decision, on the 16th of May, our soldiers embarking peacefully in gondolas, weapons on their shoulders, and without firing a shot, took possession of the virgin colony of the ancient world. What delivered her to the yoke in a manner that seems so inexplicable, so extraordinary? The age, and a destiny fulfilled. The contortions of the great French revolutionary phantom, the gestures of that foreign masker arriving at the shore-side, terrified a Venice weakened by the years: she fell through fear and hid in the swaddling clothes of her cradle. It was not indeed our army that crossed the sea, it was the century; it strode across the Lagoon and installed itself in the Doge's armchair, with Napoleon as its representative. The Council said naught of putting the two new arrivals to the question or imprisoning them *under the leads*; it handed over to them the Lion of St. Mark, the keys of the Palace and the ducal hat: the *Bridge of Sighs* heard none pass through.

Since that time, decrepit Venice, with her hair sprinkled with bell-towers, her marble brow, and her gilded wrinkles, has been sold and re-sold, like a pile of old wares: she has gone to the highest and latest bidder, Austria. She languishes now in chains at the foot of the Alps of Friuli, as once the Queen of Palmyra did at the foot of the Sabine mountains.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 20

The Lido – Venetian Festivities – The Lagoon on leaving Venice for the first time – News of Madame la Duchesse de Berry – The Jewish Cemetery

Venice, *the 10th to the 17th of September 1833.*

Every Monday during September, the people of Venice go to the *Lido* to drink and dance. As it had rained on the two previous Mondays, a great crowd was expected on Monday the 16th, if the weather was fine. I was curious to see the spectacle.

I had another reason for going to the Lido, namely my wish to say a tender word to the sea, my darling, my mistress, my love. Men of the Mediterranean lands never meet with them again once they have left them. We others, born as we are on the waves, are in a happier state: our homeland, the sea, embraces the globe; we find her again everywhere; she seems to follow us and enter exile with us. Her face and voice are the same in all climates; she has no trees or valleys that alter in form and aspect; only she seems sadder to us, as we are ourselves, on distant shores under a foreign sun; on those shores she has an air of saying to us: *‘Halt your steps and I will allow my waves to turn back, and carry you again to our own land.’*

The *Lido*, a long narrow island, extends north-east to south-west opposite Venice, separating the Lagoon from the Adriatic. At its eastern extremity is the *San Nicolò fort* below which the little boats change course; its western extremity is defended by the Fort *degli Alberoni* where the channel is open to larger vessels. The *San Nicolò* fort faces the castle of *Sant’Andrea*; the fort *degli Alberoni* looks towards the port of *Malamocco* and the shoreline of *Pellestrina*.

On the Lido itself, from the Lagoon, one sees the village of Santa Maria Elizabetta and a hamlet composed of a few sheds: the latter served as a stable for *Lord Byron*’s horses.

The contrast presented by the two sides of the Lido is neatly described by *Monsieur Nodier*: *‘On the one side, from which you can see Venice, the Lido is covered with gardens, pretty orchards, simple but picturesque houses...From there Venice appears to the gaze in all her magnificence; the canal covered with gondolas, presents, with its broad extent, the image of an immense river bathing the foot of the Ducal Palace and the steps of Saint Mark’s.’*

Today one only needs to delete those *pretty orchards, and simple but picturesque houses* from the description, and in their place put barracks, vegetable plots, and beds of reeds growing in the brackish water.

Unfortunately, having left Venice quite late, I was caught in the rain while disembarking at the Lido, beside San Nicolò fort, and I lacked the time to cross the isle to reach the sea.

In the interior of the fort’s grounds dances take place beneath the mulberry, willow, walnut and cherry trees; but this shade was almost deserted. At the tables, a few *ragazze* (lads) and sailors were eating avidly; you shouted and they brought you *Zucca arrostita*(roasted pumpkin); you drank straight from the

long thin-necked bottles. Two or three groups were rushing through a tumultuous *farandole* to the sound of a screeching violin; a scene inferior in every way to the *saltarella* in the gardens of the Villa Borghese.

A spirit of mockery seemed to be amusing itself by thwarting the ideas I had formed of *Venetian festivities* according to Madame Renier Michielli. On the Lido they celebrated, at Ascension, the marriage of the Doge with the sea. The Bucentaur (the name of Aeneas' galley also), crowned with flowers like a new bride, progressed to the midst of the waters, to the noise of canon, the sounds of music, and the stanzas of an epithalamion in old Venetian which was no longer understood.

The Feast *della Marie* (of the Marys) recalled the engagement, abduction and rescue of twelve young girls, when in 944 they were taken by pirates from Trieste and freed by their Venetian relatives. Each of them at the moment of abduction wore a gilded breastplate embroidered with pearls: during the commemorative feast the breastplate was exchanged for a hat of gilded straw, oranges from Malta, and malmsey wine.

In July, at Santa Marta, illuminated gondolas carried moveable banquets along the canals, amongst the uninhabited palaces: the feast is still kept by the populace; it is defunct among the nobility.

The church of San Zaccario furnished the occasion for, and destination of, a solemn celebration: the leaders of the Republic went there in gilded boats in memory of the *Corno Ducale* which the nuns and abbess of the convent had once presented to the Doge. This *Corno Ducale* was of gold, adorned with twenty-four large pearls, surmounted by an eight-faceted diamond, an enormous ruby and a cross of opals and emeralds.

I expected a glimpse of those fiancées, those apples and orange-flowers, those gems transformed into gleaming finery; that repast accompanied by songs and malmsey, and found instead clumsy Austrian soldiers, in smocks and heavy boots, waltzing together, pipe to pipe, moustache to moustache: seized with horror, I threw myself into my gondola and returned to Venice.

The Lagoon was lifeless; the falling tide revealed banks of silt. Monsieur Ampère saw what I saw, when he wrote these lines, which ring true:

*'This wave extending round me endlessly,  
In which one scarce can see the dripping land,  
Treeless, uninhabited, with grass-less sand,  
From which at tide's ebb a few isles break free,  
Like some soft sponge, soaking up the sea.'*

Yet I am happy to have crossed the route of that same young man who, a French poet in Italy, a student of Slavic art in Bohemia, advances towards the future, while I am returning to the past. It is a consolation to me, at the end of my travels, to meet those children of the dawn who accompany me towards my last sunset. All is not finished? Onwards! Those soldiers of the Young Guard will make the veteran's remaining journey seem shorter and the bivouacs seem less harsh.

Philippe de Comines described the Lagoon in his day: *'Surrounding the said City of Venice there are a good seventy monasteries at a distance of less than a French half-league, broadly speaking, and it is strange to see such grand and beautiful churches founded in the sea....so many bell-towers, and such*

*large buildings in the flood, and the people have no other means of reaching them than these little boats (gondolas) of which I believe they have thirty thousand.'*

I searched the islands with my gaze to find these monasteries: some have been razed; others converted into civil or military establishments. I promised myself that I would visit the learned eastern monks. My nephew, Christian de Chateaubriand, wrote his name in their book; they took him for me. Those religious foreigners still ignore what happens in Venice; they had barely heard of Lord Byron who made a semblance of studying Armenian with them. They show editions of Saint John Chrysostom; far from their homeland, inhabiting the past, they live in a triple solitude, that of their little island, their studies, and the cloister.

Comines speaks of thirty thousand gondolas: the scarceness of these boats today bears witness to the grandeur of the ruins. *'I would compare this gondola,' says Goethe, 'to a gently rocking cradle; and the cabin on top to a spacious coffin. Thus! Between cradle and coffin, carefree, we float and sway, along the Grand Canal of life!'* My gondola on its return from the Lido followed that of a group of ladies chanting lines from Tasso; but instead of heading for Venice they turned towards Pellestrina as if they wished to take to the high seas: their voices were lost in the unison of the waves. Away with my music and my dreams!

Everything changes always and in every moment: I look behind and see it as if it were another lagoon, the lagoon I crossed in 1806 on my way to Trieste: I have lifted this description from the Itinerary.

*'I left Venice on the 28th (of July) and embarked at ten at night for the mainland. The South-East wind was strong enough to inflate the sail, but not sufficient to stir the sea. As the boat pulled away I saw the lights of Venice sinking below the horizon, and distinguished the shadows of the various islands with which the coast is scattered, like dark stains on the water. These islands, instead of being covered with forts and bastions, are occupied by churches and monasteries. The bells of the hospices and lazarets could be heard, and brought to mind only thoughts of tranquility and aid in the midst of an empire of storms and dangers. We approached near enough to one of these retreats to glimpse the monks as they watched our gondola go by; they looked like ancient mariners who had reached harbor after their long voyage; perhaps they blessed the traveller, since they recalled having been like him a stranger in the land of Egypt: fuistis enim et vos advenae in terra Aegypti.'*

The traveller has returned: has he been blessed? He has retraced his course; wandering endlessly, he has done no more than follow his own wake: *'To look once more on what you have seen,'* says Marcus Aurelius, *'is to begin to live again.'* I say: it is to begin to die again.

At last, news of Madame la Duchesse de Berry is waiting for me at the Hôtel de l'Europe. The Princess de Bauffremont newly arrived in Venice, and staying at the White Lion, desires to speak to me tomorrow, Tuesday the 17th at eleven.

On my trip to the Lido, as you have read, I was unable to reach the sea; now I am not a man to capitulate on such a matter. For fear some accident might prevent me returning to Venice once I have left, I will rise before daybreak tomorrow, and go to salute the Adriatic.

Tuesday, the 17th



I have accomplished my plan.

Disembarking at dawn at San Nicolò, I took the path leaving the fort on the left. I stumbled amongst gravestones: I was in an unenclosed cemetery where they once disposed of the descendants of Judah. The stones carried Hebrew inscriptions; one was dated 1435 and that was not the oldest. The occupant had been named Violante; she had waited three hundred and ninety eight years for me to read and reveal her name. At the time of her death Doge Foscari began to experience that series of tragic incidents in his family: happy that obscure woman, above whose grave the sea birds fly, if she had no son.

An embankment built with the timber from old boats, on the same site, protects a new cemetery; wreckage shored up with the remains of wreckage. Through the peg-holes piercing the planks of those vessels' shells, I spied on the dead, surrounding two cinerary urns; the dawn lit them: sunrise over the field where men rise no more is sadder than its setting. The Jews of Venice have marble tombs. They are not so richly buried at Jerusalem; I visited their graves at the foot of the Temple: when I reflect at night that I have returned from the Valley of Jehoshaphat, I feel afraid. In Tunis, in the Jewish cemetery, instead of alabaster urns, one sees by moonlight the veiled daughters of Zion, sitting like shades among the tombs: the cross and the turban sometimes come to console them.

I continued to walk towards the Adriatic; I could not see it, though I was very close. The Lido is an area of irregular dunes something like the sand-hills of the desert of Sabbah, which borders the Dead Sea. The dunes are covered with hardy plants; these plants are sometimes contiguous, sometimes separated into tufts that emerge from the bare sand, each like a lock of hair on a corpse's skull. The land sloping towards the sea is scattered with fennel, sage, and thistles with spiky bluish flowers; the waves seemed to have dyed them with their color: these thick, blue-green, prickly thistles, are reminiscent of cacti, and represent the transition from Northern vegetation to that of the South. A gentle breeze skimming the ground whistled among those rigid plants: one might have thought the earth sighing. Stagnant rain-water formed marshy pools. Here and there goldfinches flew with little cries among the clumps of bulrushes. A herd of cows smelling of milk, whose bull mingled his dull bellowing with that of Neptune, followed me as if I were their cowherd.

My joy and sadness were great when I discovered the sea, grey and wrinkled in the half-light. I set down here, under the title of *Reverie*, an imperfect picture of what I saw, felt and thought in those confused moments of meditation and seeing.

## BOOK XXXIX

### CHAPTER 21

#### Reverie on the Lido

*Venice, the 17th of September 1833.*

Only a half-formed unsmiling dawn emerged from the sea. The transformation of shadow to light, with its changing marvels, its voiceless-ness and melody, its stars extinguished one by one in the rose and gold of morning, failed to occur. A handful of boats hugged the wind along the coast; a large ship vanished on the horizon. A flock of resting seagulls patterned the beach; some wheeled heavily above the broad sea-swell. The tide had left traces of its concentric arcs along the shoreline. The sand, garlanded with sea-weed, was wrinkled by every wave, like a brow over which time has passed. The flowing wave chained white festoons to the deserted shore.

I addressed words of love to the waves, my companions: like young girls holding each other by the hand in a ring, they had surrounded me at birth. I caressed those singers of lullabies to my cradle; I plunged my hands in the sea; I carried its sacred water to my lips, without tasting the bitterness: then I walked the waves' edge, listening to their doleful cries, sweet and familiar to my ear. I filled my pockets with shells from which the Venetians make necklaces. I often stopped to contemplate the marine immensity with a tender gaze. A mast, a cloud were enough to waken my memories.

I had crossed that sea, long years ago; opposite the Lido a storm gathered. I said to myself in the midst of the storm 'that I had braved others, but at the time of my Ocean voyage I was young, and that dangers were pleasures to me then.' I thought myself very old, then, when I sailed for Greece and Syria? What weight of days was I buried under, then?

What was I doing there by the wastes of the Adriatic? The follies of age border on those of the cradle: I wrote my name beside the net of foam, where the last wave had died; successive waves slowly attacked the consolation of a name; only on the sixteenth surge had they finally carried it away, letter by letter, as if with regret: I felt they were erasing my life.

Lord Byron rode beside this solitary sea: what were his thoughts and songs, his despondencies and hopes? Did he raise his voice to confide the inspirations of his genius to the storm? Was it to the murmur of those waves that he composed these lines?

*'...If my fame should be, as my fortunes are,  
Of hasty growth and blight, and dull Oblivion bar  
My name from out the temple where the dead  
Are honored by the nations, - let it be -'*

Byron felt that his fortunes were of *hasty growth* and blight; in those moments of doubt concerning his fame, since he thought of no other immortality, only nothingness was left to him of his joys. His disgust would have been less bitter, his flight down here less barren, if he had altered course: beyond his exhausted passions, some generous force would have carried him to a new existence. People fail to believe because they halt at the surface of things: tunnel through the earth and you will find the heavens. Here is the boundary stone at whose foot Byron marked out his grave: was it to recall Homer buried on

the shore of Ios? God had already measured out a grave for the poet, whom I preceded into the world, elsewhere. I had already visited the American forests when, beneath young *Childe Harold's* elm, near London, I dreamed René's ennui and the tide of his sadness. I followed the traces of Byron's first footsteps along the pathways at Harrow-on-the-Hill; I met with the prints of his last steps at one of the stations of his pilgrimage: no, I searched for those prints in vain: blown by the storm, the sand has covered the hoof-prints of his horse robbed of its master: '*Fisherman of Malamocco, have you heard tell of Lord Byron?*' – '*He rode here almost every day.*' – '*Do you know where he has gone?*' The fisherman looked at the sea. And the sea remembered the command Christ uttered to it: '*tace; obmutesce: peace, be still.*' Before Byron, Virgil had crossed the gulf dreaded by that poet of the Tiber: who brought Byron and Virgil back from Athens? On these very shores Venice mourns their loss: the Bucentaur no longer bathes its golden flanks in the shadow of its purple canopy; a few boats hide behind the deserted headlands, as in the first age of the Republic.

One stormy day, between Malta and the Syrtes, preparing to die, I placed this note in an empty bottle: *F. A. de Chateaubriand, wrecked on the island of Lampedusa on the 26th of December 1806, while returning from the Holy Land.* A fragile glass vessel, a few lines tossed about over the abyss, are all that would have acknowledged my existence. The current would have carried my wandering epitaph to the Lido, as today the tide of the years has cast my wandering life ashore. Dinelli, second in command of my *polacre* to Alexandria, was a Venetian: he spent the night with me, three or four hours by the glass, leaning against the mast and singing to the gusts of wind,

*'Si tanto mi piace  
Si rara Bella,  
Io perdere la pace  
Quando se destera.*

*She pleases me so  
So rare a Beauty,  
No peace do I know  
When she awakes.'*

Is Dinelli reposing *sul'margine d'un rio* beside his slumbering mistress? Has she woken? Does my vessel still exist? Has it been sunk? Has it been repaired? Its passenger can do nothing to restore his life! Perhaps that boat whose distant yards I see, is the same that was entrusted with my former fate? Perhaps the dismembered keel of my skiff has furnished the palisades of the Jewish cemetery?

But have I told all, in the *Itinerary*, about my voyage beginning at Desdemona's harbor and ending in Chimène's country? Did I travel to Christ's tomb in a mood of repentance? One thought alone then filled my soul; I consumed the hours: beneath my impatient sail, my gaze fixed on the evening star, I asked of it a northerly wind to drive me on more swiftly. How my heart beat approaching the shores of Spain! What miseries followed that mystery! The sun lights them yet; the reason I still have reminds me of them.

Venice, when I saw you, a quarter of a century ago, you were ruled by a great man, your oppressor and mine; an island awaited his tomb; an island is yours: you sleep, each of you immortal, on your St. Helena. Venice! Our fates have run in parallel! My dreams vanished as your palaces crumbled; the days

of my youth have darkened, as have the arabesques with which the summits of your monuments are adorned. But you will perish unaware; I see my own ruins; your voluptuous sky, the elegance of the waves that wash you, find me as foolish as ever I was. I have grown old in vain; I still dream a thousand chimeras. The energy of my nature is penned in my heart; the years instead of calming me, have only succeeded in driving my youthfulness from my external self, in order to lodge it in my breast. What caresses will draw it forth, to prevent it stifling me? What dew will fall on me? What breeze emanating from the flowers will penetrate me with its gentle breath? The wind that sighs above this half-naked head blows from no happy shore!

**End of Book XXXIX**

## BOOK XL

### CHAPTER 1

Madame de Bauffremont's arrival in Venice – Cataio – The Duke of Modena –  
The Tomb of Petrarch at Arqua – A Land of Poets

*Venice to Ferrara, 17th to the 18th of September 1833.*

There was an immense gulf between this reverie and the reality to which I returned on presenting myself at the Princesse de Bauffremont's hotel; I was forced to leap from 1806, the memories of which had just occupied me, to 1833, where in fact I found myself to be: Marco Polo descended on Venice from China, after just such an absence of twenty-seven years.

Madame de Bauffremont bore in her face and her manners the unmistakable mark of a Montmorency: she might well, like that Charlotte, mother of the Great Condé and the Duchesse de Longueville, have been Henri IV's lover. The Princess told me that Madame la Duchesse de Berry had written a letter to me from Pisa which I had not received: Her Royal Highness had arrived in Ferrara where she expected me.

It cost me something to abandon my retreat; I needed a week or so more for my sightseeing; above all I regretted not seeing the end of the Zanze adventure, but my time belonged to Henri V's mother, and whenever I travel something always occurs that sends me off track.

I left my luggage at the Hôtel de l'Europe on departure, counting on returning with Madame.

I found my calash again at Fusina: they retrieved it from an old shed, like a jewel from the Royal wardrobe. I left the shore that may take its name from the King of the Ocean's *trident*: *Fuscina*.

Returning to Padua, I told the coachman: '*The Ferrara road.*' The route is delightful as far as Monselice: an extremely elegant hill, orchards of fig-trees, mulberries and willows festooned with vines, pleasant meadows, and ruined castles. I passed Cataio, adorned with soldiers: the Abbé Lenglet, otherwise very erudite, mistook this name for Cathay. This Cataio belongs not to Angelica, but to the Duke of Modena. I found myself face to face with His Highness. He had deigned to take a walk along the highroad. The Duke is an offshoot of the race of Princes invented by Machiavelli; he was proud enough not to recognize Louis-Philippe.

The village of Arqua displays the tomb of Petrarch, sung along with its site by Lord Byron:

*'Che fai, che pensi? che pur dietro guardi  
Nel tempo, che tornar non pote amai,  
Anima sconsolata?'*

*Disconsolate spirit, what do you think, or do?  
Why do you look behind, at days  
that cannot come again?'*

All this country, to a distance of sixty miles around, is the native soil of writers and poets: Livy, Virgil, Catullus, Ariosto, Guarini, the Strozzi, the three Bentivoglios, Bembo, Bartoli, Boiardo, Pindemonte, Varano, Monti, and a crowd of other famous men, were engendered by this land of the *Muses*.

Even Tasso was of Bergamese origin. I have not met the most recent of these poets except for one of the two Pindemontes. I did not know Cesarotti or Monti, I would have been happy to have met Pellico and Manzoni, the dying rays of Italian glory. The Euganean Mountains, which I travelled through, were gilded by the sunset with a pleasant variety of forms and great purity of line: one of those mountains resembled the main pyramid at Sakhara, when outlined against the Libyan horizon by the setting sun.

I continued my journey by night through Rovigo; a blanket of fog covered the earth. I only saw the River Po at the Lagoscuro crossing. The carriage stopped; the coachman summoned the ferry with his trumpet. The silence was complete; except for the barking of a dog on the opposite bank of the river, and the distant cascade of a triple echo responding to his call; a foretaste of Tasso's Elysian empire which we were about to enter.

A splashing sound in the water, through the fog and the shadows, announced the ferry; it slid along the rope tied between anchored boats. Between four and five in the morning of the 18th I arrived in Ferrara: I stopped at the *Three Crowns*; Madame was expected there.

Wednesday the 18th.

Her Royal Highness not having arrived, I visited the Church of San Paolo; I only saw the tombs; and never a soul, save for those of the dead and mine which was barely alive: at the end of the choir hung a painting by Guercino.

The cathedral is deceptive: you see a front and two sides incrustated with bas-reliefs of sacred and profane subjects. On this exterior there is further ornamentation, more usually placed inside Gothic buildings, such as rudentures, Arabic sculptured corbels, soffits with aureoles, and galleries of little columns with ogives, and trefoils, built into the thickness of the walls. You enter, and you stand amazed on finding a different church with hemispherical vaults and massive pillars. Something like this disparity exists in France, both physically and morally: inside our old chateaux they indulge in modern offices, masses of rats' nests, alcoves and wardrobes. Penetrate the souls of a good number of those men with historic names and coats of arms, and what do you find there: the inclinations of the ante-chamber.

I was quite embarrassed by this aspect of the cathedral: it seemed to have been turned inside-out like a robe: a bourgeois woman of the age of Louis XV disguised as a twelfth century lady of the manor.

Ferrara, once so lively with its women, pleasures and poets, is almost uninhabited: its wide streets are deserted, and the sheep can graze there. The decaying houses are not rescued as they are in Venice, by the architecture, the vessels, the sea and the natural gaiety of the place. At the gateway to so wretched a Romagna, Ferrara, under the yoke of her Austrian garrison, has the appearance of an oppressed person: she seems to bear Tasso's everlasting grief; about to fall, she stoops like an old woman. The sole monument to the present, a criminal court, half rises from the ground, with some unfinished prison blocks. Whom will they put in these fresh dungeons: Young Italy? The new gaols, surmounted by cranes and edged with scaffolding, like the palace of Dido's city, neighbor the ancient dungeon of the poet of *Jerusalem Delivered*.

BOOK XL  
CHAPTER 2  
Tasso

*Ferrara, the 18th of September 1833.*

If there is one life that must make us despair of happiness where men of genius are concerned, it is that of Tasso. The lovely sky his eyes saw when first they opened to the light of day was a deceptive sky.

*‘My troubles,’ he says, ‘began with my life. Cruel fortune snatched me from my mother’s arms. I remember her kisses mingled with tears, her prayers that the winds carried away. I could no longer press my face against hers. With tottering steps like Ascanius or the young Camilla, I followed my proscribed father’s wanderings. I grew up in poverty and exile.’*

Torquato Tasso lost Bernardo Tasso at Ostiglia. Torquato eclipsed Bernardo as a poet; he gave him immortality as a father.

Emerging from obscurity with the publication of Rinaldo, Tasso was summoned to Ferrara. There he debuted in the midst of the celebrations of Alfonso II’s marriage with the Arch-Duchess Barbara, and there he met Leonora, Alfonso’s sister: love and misfortune contrived to endow his genius with all its beauty. *‘I saw,’* says the poet, describing in his *Aminta* the noble court of Ferrara, *‘I saw goddesses and charming nymphs, free of veils or mists: I felt myself inspired by a new power, by a new divinity, and I sang of war and heroes...!’*

Tasso read the stanzas of his Gerusalemme to Alfonso’s two sisters, Lucrezia and Leonora, as he composed them. He was sent to Cardinal Ippolito d’Este, who was established at the court of France: he pawned his clothes and furniture to make the journey, while the Cardinal, whom he honored by his presence, made the sumptuous gift of a hundred Barbary steeds with their superbly dressed Arab riders, to Charles IX. Dispatched at first to the stables, Tasso was then presented to the poet-king, a friend of Ronsard. In a letter which we have, he judges the French harshly. He composed a few lines of his Gerusalemme in an Abbey in France which Cardinal Ippolito had established; it was at Châalis, near Ermenonville, that Jean-Jacques Rousseau dreamed and died: Dante also may have visited Paris.

Tasso returned to Italy in 1571, and so failed to witness the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. He went straight to Rome and from there returned to Ferrara. His *Aminta* was given with great success. While rivalling Ariosto, the creator of Rinaldo admired the creator of *Orlando* to such an extent that he refused the homage to him of that poet’s nephew: *‘The laurels you offer me,’* he wrote, *‘have been placed on the head of him whose blood you share, through the judgement of scholars, gentlemen, and myself. Prostrating myself before his image, I grant him the noblest titles that affection and respect can dictate to me. I will proclaim him aloud as my father, my lord and my master.’*

This modesty, though unknown in our age, did not forestall jealousy. Torquato watched the celebrations given by Venice to Henri III on his return from Poland, while a manuscript of the *Gerusalemme* was secretly printed: detailed criticisms by friends whose views Tasso consulted alarmed him. Perhaps he revealed himself as over-sensitive; but perhaps he had built hopes of success in love on hopes of glory. He believed himself surrounded by trickery and treason; he was obliged to defend his life. His stay at

Belriguardo, where Goethe evokes his shade, did little to calm him: *'Like the nightingale,'* (says the great German poet in a speech of the great Italian poet) *'he exhaled from his love-sick breast a sorrowful harmony: his delightful singing, his sacred melancholy, captivated the ear and the heart...'*

*'What has a greater right to cross the centuries mysteriously than the secret of a noble love, confided to the secrecy of a sublime poem? ...'*

*'How delightful it is'* (Goethe again interprets Leonora's feelings), *'how delightful it is to see oneself reflected in this man's fine genius, to have him beside one in the splendors of this life, to advance with him swiftly towards the future! Time cannot hurt you now, Leonora: living in the land of poetry, you will be forever young, forever happy, as the years carry you along in their course.'*

The singer of Erminia conjures Leonora (again in the German poet's lines) to let him stay in one of her most solitary villas: *'Suffer me,'* he tells her, *'to be your slave. How I shall nurse your trees! With what care, in autumn, will I cover the tender saplings of your lemon grove! I will raise beautiful beds of flowers beneath the glass.'*

The tale of Tasso's love was lost, Goethe recreated it.

The sorrows of the *Muses* and religious scruples began to disturb Tasso's reason. He was made to endure a short period of detention. He escaped half-naked, wandered in the mountains, borrowed a shepherd's rags and, disguised as one, arrived at his sister Cornelia's house. His sister's embrace, and the attractions of his native region, eased his sufferings for a while: *'I wished,'* he says, *'to retire to Sorrento as to a peaceful harbor: quasi in porto di quiete.'* But he could not rest where he was born! A spell drew him to Ferrara: love is our homeland.

Received coldly by Duke Alfonso, he withdrew once more; he entered the little courts of Mantua, Urbino, and Turin, singing for his supper. He addressed the Metauro, Raphael's native stream: *'Slight, but glorious child of the Apennines, restless traveller, to your shores I come, to find safety and rest.'* Armida had reached Raphael's cradle; she was to preside over the enchantments of the Farnesina.

Surprised by a storm near Vercelli, Tasso celebrated the night there which he spent at a gentleman's house in his fine dialogue *The Father of the Family*. At Turin he was refused entry, he was in so wretched a state. Told that Alfonso was about to marry again, he took the road to Ferrara once more. A divine spirit attached itself to the footsteps of this god hidden beneath the smock of a shepherd of Admetus; he thought he saw and heard that spirit: one day, seated by the fire and seeing the sunlight through a window: *'Ecco l'amico spirito che cortesemente è venuto a favellarmi: Behold, the friendly spirit who comes courteously to speak with me.'* And Torquato talked to a ray of sunlight. He re-entered the fateful city as a bird, fascinated, hurls itself into a serpent's jaws; misunderstood and repulsed by the courtiers, abused by the servants, he overflowed with complaint, and Alfonso shut him in a madhouse at the Sant'Anna hospital.

Then the poet wrote to one of his friends: *'Beneath the weight of misfortune, I have renounced all thoughts of glory; I will call myself happy if I can only assuage the thirst that devours me...The idea of captivity without end and indignation at the mistreatment I endure adds to my despair. The state of my beard, my hair, and my clothes makes me an object of disgust even to myself.'*



The prisoner begged mercy of all including his pitiless persecutor; from his lyre he drew tones that ought to have made the walls with which his misery was surrounded fall.

*‘Piango il morir: non piango il morir solo.*

*Ma il modo.....*

*Mi saria di conforto aver la tomba,*

*Ch’altre mole innalzar credea co’ carmi.*

*I weep at death: not only at death I weep.*

*But its manner.....*

*It will comfort me to possess the tomb*

*Of one who thought to raise other monuments in verse.’*

Lord Byron has composed a poem on *The Lament of Tasso*; but he cannot avoid substituting himself for the hero in the scene throughout; in as much as his genius lacks tenderness, his *lament* is merely an *imprecation*.

Tasso addressed this plea to the Council of Ancients at Bergamo:

*‘Torquato Tasso, not only Bergamese by origin, but by affection, though having lost his father’s inheritance, and his mother’s dowry...yet (after many years serfdom and the weariness of long years) never having, in all his miseries, lost the faith he has in that city (Bergamo) dares to ask her for assistance. Let her beseech the Duke of Ferrara, once my protector and benefactor, to return me to my own place, my relatives and myself. The unfortunate Tasso thus begs your lordships (the magistrates of Bergamo) to send Messir Licino or some other to negotiate my deliverance. The memory of this good deed would end only with my life. Di VV.SS affezionatissimo servitore, Torquato Tasso, prigione e infermo nel ospedal di Sant’ Anna in Ferrara.’*

They refused Tasso ink, pen, and paper. He had sung the magnanimous Alfonso, and the magnanimous Alfonso plunged into the depths of a madhouse the one who had shed an imperishable light over his brow. In a sonnet full of grace, the prisoner begs a cat to lend him the glow of her eyes to replace the light he has been deprived of: an inoffensive conceit that proves the poet’s docility and deep distress. *‘As on the ocean that the storm infests and darkens....the weary helmsman lifts his night-bound head towards the stars that gleam about the pole, so I, dear cat, in my wretched trouble. Your eyes seem twin stars that shine before me...O cat, lamp of my wakefulness, beloved cat! Since God keeps you from hurt, since Heaven feeds you on milk and meat, give me your light to write my verses: fatemi luce a scriver queste carmi.’*

At night Tasso thought he heard strange noises, the chiming of funeral bells; spectres tormented him. *‘I can stand no more,’* he cried, *‘I succumb!’* Attacked by a grave illness, he thought he saw the Virgin descending miraculously to save him.

*‘Egro io languiva, e d’alto sonno avvinto....*

*Giacea con guancia di pallor dipinta,*

*Quando di luce incoronata.....*

*Maria, pronta scendesti al mio dolore.*

*Ill, I languished conquered by deep sleep....  
I lay there, pallor spreading o'er my cheeks,  
When, crowned with light.....  
Mary, you flew swiftly to tend my sorrow.'*

Montaigne visited Tasso reduced to this sad misfortune, and gave witness of his compassion. At the same period, Camoëns ended his life in a hospice in Lisbon. What consoled him as he lay dying on his pallet? It was the poems of the prisoner of Ferrara. The captive author of the *Gerusalemme*, admirer of the poverty-stricken author of the *Lusiads*, addressed Vasco da Gama: '*Rejoice to have been sung by the poet, who so deploys his glorious flight that your swift vessels shall not sail so far: Tant'oltre stende il glorioso volo, Che i tuoi spalmati legni andar men lunge.*'

So Eridanus' voice rang out beside the Tagus; so, across the seas, two famous sufferers of like genius and like destiny celebrated each other from one hospice to the other, to the shame of the human race.

How many kings, great or foolish, drowned now in oblivion, believing themselves, at the end of the sixteenth century, persons worthy of remembrance were ignorant even of the names of Tasso and Camoëns! In 1754, one reads, for the first time, 'the name of Washington, in the tale of an obscure battle in the forest, between a crowd of Frenchmen, Englishmen and savages: where is the clerk at Versailles, or purveyor to the *Deer Park*, where is above all the courtier or academician who would have exchanged names at that time with that American planter?

*Ferrara, the 18th of September 1833.*

Envy hastened to spread its poison through the open wound. The Accademia della Crusca declared: '*that Jerusalem Delivered was a cold and leaden compilation, in an obscure and uneven style, full of ridiculous lines, barbarous words, failing to compensate by any kind of beauty for its innumerable faults.*' Fanaticism in support of the works of Ariosto dictated the charge. But cries of popular approval stifled the academic curses: it was no longer possible for Duke Alfonso to prolong the captivity of a man who was guilty only of poetry. The Pope demanded the deliverance of the glory of Italy.

Emerging from prison, Tasso was no happier. Leonora was dead. He trailed his sorrows from city to city.

At Loretto, almost dead of hunger, he was on the point, as one of his biographers says, '*of begging with the hand that had built Armida's palace.*' At Naples, he experienced a few tender feelings for his native region. '*Here,*' he said, '*are places I left as a child....After many years, I return white-haired, and ill to my native shore: E donde partii fanciullo, or dopo tanti lustri torno ...canuto ed egro alle native spondo.*'

He preferred a cell in the monastery of Montoliveto to more sumptuous residences. On a journey he made to Rome, fever seized him and a hospice was yet again his refuge.

From Rome and Florence he returned to Naples, and turning from illness to his immortal poem he re-wrote and spoiled it. He began his verses delle sette giornate del mondo creato: *On the Seven Days of Creation*, a subject treated by Du Bartas. Tasso had Eve emerging from Adam's breast, while God '*sprinkled sweet peace over the limbs of our first father as he slept: ed irrigò di placada quiete tutte le membra al sonnacchioso...*'

The poet softens the Biblical scene, and in the tender creations of his lyre woman is simply man's first dream. The disappointment of having to leave incomplete a pious work, which he considered his hymn of expiation, made the dying Tasso determine to condemn his profane poetry to extinction.

Regarded as lower than a thief by his society, the poet received the offer of an escort to accompany him to Rome, from Marco Sciarra, the famous leader of the condottieri. Presented at the Vatican, the Pope addressed these words to him: *'Torquato, you will bring honor to this crown, which honors those who have worn it before you'*: a eulogy which posterity has confirmed. Tasso replied to the praise by repeating this line of Seneca's: *Magnifica verba mors prope admota excutit: Death will soon carry off those magnificent words.'*

Attacked by an illness which he sensed would cure all others, he retired to the monastery of Sant'Onofrio, on the 1st of April 1595. He reached his last refuge in a storm of wind and rain. The monks received him at the portal where Domenichino's frescoes still wear away today. He saluted the holy fathers: *'I come among you to die.'* Hospitable cloisters, sanctuaries of religion and poetry, you have lent your solitude to the exiled Dante and the dying Tasso!

All treatment was in vain. On the seventh morning of fever the Pope's doctor declared that the illness gave little reason to hope. Tasso embraced him and thanked him for announcing such good news. Then he gazed heavenwards and, in a heartfelt manner, gave thanks to the God of Mercy.

His weakness increasing, he wished to receive the Eucharist in the monastery church: he dragged himself there leaning on the monks and returned borne in their arms. When he was once more lying on his bed, the Prior interrogated him regarding his last wishes.

*'I had little care for worldly goods during my life; I own still less in dying. I have no testament to make.'*

*'– In what place do you wish your grave to be?'*

*'– In your church, if you will deign to so honor my remains.'*

*'– Do you wish to dictate your own epitaph?'*

Now, turning towards his confessor: *'Father, write this "I render my soul to God who gave it to me and my body to the earth from which it came." I bequeath to this monastery the sacred image of my Redeemer.'*

He took a crucifix in his hands which he had received from the Pope and pressed it to his lips.

Seven days were yet to pass. The afflicted Christian having solicited the favor of holy oil, Cardinal Cinzio arrived bearing the Sovereign Pontiff's benediction. The dying man displayed great joy. *'Here,'* he cried, *'is the crown that I came to Rome to seek; I hope to be in glory with it tomorrow.'*

Virgil asked Augustus to throw the *Aeneid* into the flames; Tasso begged Cinzio to burn the *Gerusalemme*. Then he asked to be alone with the crucifix.

The Cardinal had not reached the door when his tears, forcibly repressed, flooded forth: the bell sounded the final agony, and the monks, chanting the prayer for the dying, wept and lamented in the cloister. At

this sound, Tasso said to the charitable recluses (he seemed to see them moving round him like shades): *'My friends, you think I am leaving you; I merely go before you.'*

From then onwards he spoke only with his confessor and some learned fathers. Near his last breath, these words came from his mouth, the fruit of his life's experience: *'If there were no Death, there would be nothing more wretched in this world than Man.'* On the 25th of April 1595, towards noon, the poet cried out: *'In manus tuas, Domine.....'*

The remainder of the sentence could scarcely be heard, as if pronounced by a traveller in the distance.

The author of the *Henriade* died in the Hôtel de Villette, on the banks of the Seine, and rejected the aid of the Church; the poet of the *Gerusalemme* died a Christian at Sant'Onofrio: compare, and see how faith adds to the beauty of death.

All that is said of Tasso's posthumous triumph seems suspect to me. His evil fortune was still more obstinate than is supposed. He did not die at the moment designated for his triumph: he survived that projected triumph by twenty-four hours. He was not wrong about his destiny; he was never crowned, not even after his death; his body was not displayed on the Capitol clothed as a senator in the midst of the crowd and the nation's tears; he was buried, as he had requested, in the church of Sant'Onofrio. The stone above him (as he also wished) gave no date or name; ten years later, Manso, Marchese della Villa, Tasso's last friend and Milton's host, composed an admirable epitaph: *'Hic jacet Torquatus Tasso: here lies Torquatus Tasso.'* Manso had difficulty in obtaining permission to have it carved: since the monks, religiously observing the testator's last wishes, opposed any kind of inscription; and yet, without the *hic jacet* or the name *Torquatus Tasso*, his remains would have been lost within that monastery of the Janiculum, as those of Poussin were in *San Lorenzo in Lucina*.

Cardinal Cinzio formed the plan of erecting a mausoleum to the singer of the Holy Sepulchre; an abortive plan. Cardinal Bevilacqua wrote a pompous epitaph destined for the cornice of another future mausoleum, and the thing rested there. Two centuries later Napoleon's brother occupied himself with a monument at Sorrento: Joseph soon exchanged the cradle of Tasso for the tomb of El Cid.

At last, in our own day, a great funeral monument was begun in memory of the Italian Homer, once a poverty-stricken wanderer like the Greek poet: has the work been completed? Personally, I prefer the little stone in the chapel, of which I have spoken in the *Itinerary*, to any marble tumulus: *'I found (in Venice, in 1806) in an empty church, the tomb of the painter (Titian) and had some difficulty finding it: the same thing occurred in Rome (in 1803) regarding Tasso's grave. After all though, the remains of a religious poet, a victim of misfortune, are not misplaced in being sited in a monastery. The poet of the Gerusalemme seems to have found sanctuary in an unknown sepulchre, as if escaping from the persecutions of men; he filled the world with his fame, and himself remains hidden beneath an orange-tree in Sant'Onofrio.'* (I was right about the orange tree; that is indeed what grows in the interior courtyard of Sant'Onofrio. **Note:** Paris, 1840)

The Italian commission charged with looking after funeral monuments asked me to take up a collection in France and distribute indulgences from the *Muses* to all the loyal donors who gave something towards the poet's monument. July 1830 arrived; my wealth and my credit partook of the fate of Tasso's remains.

Those remains seem to possess a virtue that resists all opulence, rejects all notoriety, strips itself of all honors; great tombs are necessary for little men, little ones for the great.

The God who smiles at my dreams hurling me from the Janiculum along with the Senators of ancient Rome has led me back to Tasso by a different path. Here I can better judge the poet whose three daughters were born in Ferrara: Armida, Erminia and Clorinda.

What exists of the House of Este today? Who thinks now of Obizzo, Niccolò, or Ercole? What name remains: that of Leonora. What do visitors seek in Ferrara: Alfonso's palace: no, Tasso's prison. Where do people go in procession century after century: to the sepulchre of the persecutor: no to the dungeon of the persecuted.

Tasso won a memorable victory there: he rendered Ariosto forgotten; the visitor ignores the bones of the poet of *Orlando* in the Museum, and hastens to see the cell belonging to the poet of *Rinaldo* in Sant'Onofrio. Seriousness befits a tomb: the man who smiled is forgotten for the man who wept. During life happiness wins merit; after death it loses the prize: in the eyes of future generations, only tragic lives are viewed as beautiful. To those martyrs of intellect, pitilessly consumed on this earth, adversity is counted an accumulation of glory: they sleep with their immortal sufferings in the grave, like kings with their crowns. We other common wretches, we are too little for our troubles to become, for posterity, an adornment to our lives. Stripped of everything in completing my course, my grave will be no temple to me, but a place of renewal; I am no Tasso; I will elude those tender and harmonious predictions penned by the hand of friendship:

*'Tasso wandering from town to town,  
And overcome by trouble, one fine day,  
Beside a springing laurel bush sat down  
That spread its greening boughs around  
The tomb of Virgil, every way...etc.'*

I hastened to bear my homage to that son of the *Muses*, so truly consoled by his brothers: a rich Ambassador, I had subscribed to his mausoleum in Rome; an indigent pilgrim on the path of exile, I went to kneel in his cell in Ferrara. I know doubts have been raised about the identity of the location; but, like all true believers, I mock such tales; that crypt, whatever they say, is the very place where the *pazzo per amore: crazed by love* lived seven whole years; you must pass through the cloisters to reach that gaol where light slips through the bars of iron in a tiny basement window, where the sloping vault that chills your brow drips saltpeter rot onto damp earth that paralyses your feet.

On the walls, outside the cell, and all around the wicket, you can read the names of the worshippers of the *god*: the statue of Memnon, trembling with harmonies at the touch of dawn, was covered with comments by witnesses of its marvels. I did not scribble my *ex-voto* there; I hid among the crowd, whose secret prayers would be, because of their very humility, more agreeable to Heaven.

The buildings which contain Tasso's prison now belong to a hospital open to all sufferers; they are under the protection of the saints: *Sancto Torquato sacrum: sacred to Torquato Tasso*. At some distance from the holy cell is a dilapidated courtyard; in the midst of this courtyard, the concierge cultivates a flower bed surrounded by a hedge of mallows; the fence, of a pleasant green, supports large and beautiful

flowers. I gathered one of its violet-colored roses that seemed to me as if it was growing at the foot of Calvary. Genius is like Christ; misunderstood, persecuted, beaten with rods, crowned with thorns, hung on a cross by mankind and for mankind, it dies leaving them its light and rises again to be worshipped.

## BOOK XL

### CHAPTER 3

#### The arrival of Madame la Duchesse de Berry

*Ferrara, the 18th of September 1833.*

Having gone out on the morning of the 18th, on returning to the *Three Crowns* I found the street blocked by a crowd; the neighbors gaping from the windows. A guard of a hundred Austrian and Papal soldiers surrounded the inn. The officers of the garrison, the city magistrates, generals, and the pro-legate were waiting for MADAME, of whom a courier in French livery had announced the arrival. The rooms and staircases were decorated with flowers. There was never a finer reception for an exile.

At the appearance of the carriages, the drum beat a tattoo, the regimental band struck up, and the soldiers presented arms. MADAME, caught up in the crowd, had difficulty descending from her calash which had stopped at the door of the hostelry; I hurried up; she recognized me in the midst of the throng. From among the assembled authorities and the beggars who threw themselves towards her, she held out her hand, saying: '*Mon fils est votre roi! My son is your king! Help me to pass, then.*' I did not find her altered much, only a little thinner; she had something of the air of a knowing child.

I led the way; she gave her arm to Monsieur de Lucchesi; Madame de Podenas followed. We mounted the stairs and entered the apartments between two rows of grenadiers, to the clash of arms, the sound of fanfares, and the *vivats* of the spectators. I was taken for a major domo, and people applied to me to be presented to Henri V's mother. My name was linked to hers in the minds of the crowd.

It seems that Madame had been received, from Palermo to Ferrara, with the same marks of respect, despite messages from Louis-Philippe's envoys. Monsieur de Broglie having had the nerve to demand that the Pope return the exile, Cardinal Bernetti replied: '*Rome has always been a refuge for fallen greatness. If Bonaparte's family have in former times found sanctuary with the Father of the Faithful, all the more reason for the same hospitality to be extended towards the families of the Most Christian Kings.*'

I thought little of the messages, but I was struck vividly by the contrast: in France, the government insulted a woman they feared; in Italy they only remembered the titles, courage and misfortunes of Madame la Duchesse de Berry.

I was forced to accept my improvised role of First Gentleman of the Chamber. The Princess was extremely amusing: she wore a dress of greyish net, tight at the waist; on her head, a kind of little widow's bonnet or child's cap, like that of a schoolgirl doing penance. She buzzed here and there like a cockchafer, and flew about dizzily, with a confident air, amongst the curious, just as she had flitted about the woods of the Vendée. She looked at no one and recognized no one; I was obliged to pull disrespectfully at her robe, or block the way, saying: '*Madame, this is the Austrian Commandant, the officer in white; Madame, this is the Commander of the Papal forces, the officer in blue. Madame, this is the pro-legate, the tall young priest in black.*' She stopped, said a few words in Italian or French, not correctly exactly, but in a lively, open, and pleasant way, such that the disagreeable seemed agreeable: her allure was unlike any other. I felt almost embarrassed, and yet I felt no anxiety about the effect produced by the little escapee from fire and prison.

A comical confusion ensued. There is something I must say in all modesty; the vain clamor surrounding my life increases the more my life's true silence deepens. I cannot stop at an inn these days, in France or abroad, without being immediately assailed. To the old Italy, I am the defender of religion; to the young, the defender of liberty; to the authorities, I have the honor to be *Sua Eccellenza GIA ambasciatore di Francia: the FORMER Ambassador of France* to Verona and Rome. The ladies, all doubtless of a rare beauty, endow *Atala* the Floridian girl and the Moor *Aben-Hamet* with the language of *Angelica* and *Aquilant the Black*. Then I find students appear, old priests in skullcaps, ladies whom I thank for their expressions of feeling and favor; and then the *medicanti*, too well brought up to think a former ambassador as much of a rogue as their lordships.

Now, my admirers rushed to the *Three Crowns* hotel, with the crowd attracted by *Madame le Duchesse de Berry*: they drove me into a window corner and began a harangue intended for Marie-Caroline. In the mental chaos, the two crowds sometimes mistook master and mistress: I was saluted as *Your Royal Highness* and MADAME told me she had been complimented on *Le Génie du Christianisme*: we exchanged roles. The Princess was charmed to have created a work in four volumes, and I was proud to have been taken for a daughter of kings.

Suddenly the Princess vanished: she went off on foot, with Count Lucchesi, to see Tasso's cell; she knew all about prisons. Mother of the exiled orphan, of the child heir of Saint Louis, Marie-Caroline emerging from the fortress of *Blaye* only to seek a poet's dungeon in Renée of France's city, is something unique in the history of fate and human glory. The venerable exiles of Prague might have passed through Ferrara a hundred times without such an idea entering their heads; but Madame de Berry is a Neapolitan, she is a compatriot of Tasso who said: *Ho desiderio di Napoli, come l'anime ben disposte, del paradise: I long for Naples, as untroubled souls long for Paradise.*

When I was in opposition and disgrace; and the decrees were being concocted clandestinely at the Palace, and still remained hidden in joyous hearts: the Duchesse de Berry, one day, saw an engraving representing the poet of the *Gerusalemme* at the bars of his cell: '*I hope,*' she said, '*we shall soon see Chateaubriand thus.*' Words spoken in prosperity, to be no more taken account of, than some plan conceived while drunk. I should have joined MADAME in Tasso's very cell, having endured a police gaol for her. What elevation of feeling in the noble Princess, what a mark of esteem she showed me in addressing herself to me in the hour of her misfortune regarding the project she had conceived! If her initial request valued my talents too highly, her confidence was less at fault in regard to my character.



## BOOK XL

### CHAPTER 4

Mademoiselle Lebeschu – Count Lucchesi-Palli – Discussion – Dinner – Bugeaud the gaoler – Madame de Saint-Priest, Monsieur de Saint-Priest – Madame de Podenas – Our Troop – My refusal to go to Prague – I yield to a word

*Ferrara, the 18th of September 1833.*

Monsieur de Saint-Priest, Madame de Saint-Priest and Monsieur Sala arrived. The latter had been an officer in the Royal Guard, and he had replaced Monsieur Delloye, a Major in the same Guard, in the business of publishing my works. Two hours after Madame's arrival, I met Mademoiselle Lebeschu, my compatriot; she hastened to tell me of the hopes that they wished to place in me. Mademoiselle Lebeschu figured in the Carlo Alberto trial.

Returning from her poetic visit, the Duchess de Berry had me summoned: she was waiting for me with Monsieur le Comte Lucchesi and Madame de Podenas.

Count Lucchesi-Palli is tall and dark: MADAME calls him a Tancred towards women. His manner towards his wife, the princess, is a masterpiece of propriety, neither humble nor arrogant, a respectful mixture of a husband's authority and a subject's submission.

Madame immediately talked of her affairs; she thanked me for arriving at her invitation; she told me she would go to Prague, not only to see her family, but to obtain her son's certificate of majority: then she declared that she would take me with her.

This declaration, which I had not expected, dismayed me: to return to Prague! I presented the objections that sprang to mind.

If I were to go to Prague with Madame and she obtained what she desired, the honor of the victory would no longer belong wholly to Henri V's mother, and that would not be right; if Charles X insisted on refusing a certificate of majority, in my presence (as I was persuaded he would), I would lose all credit. It thus seemed to me better to keep me in reserve, in case Madame failed in her negotiations.

Her Royal Highness argued against my reasons: she maintained she could have no effect in Prague if I did not accompany her; that I made her grandparents fearful; that she consented to allow me the credit for victory and the honor of attaching my name to her son's coming of age.

Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Priest entered in the midst of this discussion and insisted that the Princess was right. I persisted in my refusal. Dinner was announced.

MADAME was in high spirits. She told me, in the most amusing manner, of her quarrels at Blaye with General Bugeaud. Bugeaud attacked her politics and grew angry; Madame was angrier than he: they screamed at each other like two eagles, and she drove him from the room. Her Royal Highness suppressed certain details which she might make me party to if I were to accompany her. She would not let Bugeaud alone; she mistreated him in every way: '*You know, I asked for you on four occasions?*' she told me. '*Bugeaud passed my requests to D'Argout. D'Argout replied that Bugeaud was a fool, that he should*

*have refused you entrance out of hand; he has good sense (de bon goût), that Monsieur D'Argout.'* MADAME stressed the rhyming words, in her Italian accent.

However, the rumor of my refusal having spread, the faithful became anxious. After dinner Mademoiselle Lebeschü came to lecture me in my room; Monsieur de Saint-Priest, a man of wit and reason, first sent Monsieur Sala to me, then replaced him and exhorted me in turn. '*Monsieur de La Ferronnays has been dispatched to the Hradschin, in order to smooth out any initial difficulties. Monsieur de Montbel has arrived; he was charged with going to Rome and bringing back the marriage contract, written in due and proper form, which was in the hands of Cardinal Zurla.*'

'Supposing,' continued Monsieur de Saint-Priest, '*that Charles X refuses to sign a deed of majority, would it not be a good thing for MADAME to obtain a statement from her son? What form should such a declaration take?*' – 'A brief note,' I replied, '*in which Henri should protest against Philippe's usurpation.*'

Monsieur de Saint-Priest carried my words to MADAME. My resistance continued to pre-occupy those around the Princess. Madame de Saint-Priest, with her elevation of feeling, seemed the most active in her regrets. Madame de Podenas never lost her habit of smiling serenely in order to display her excellent teeth: her calm in the midst of our agitation was more sensible.

We bore a strong resemblance to a troop of strolling players, French actors, performing, in Ferrara and by consent of the noble magistrates of the city, the drama of *The Fugitive Princess*, or *The Persecuted Mother*. Stage right rose Tasso's prison, stage left Ariosto's mansion; in the background the palace where Leonora and Alfonso's celebrations were enacted. These Royals without a kingdom, this agitated court contained by two travelling calashes, with the hotel of the *Three Crowns* as their palace at night; these State councils held in the room of an inn, capped all the varied scenes of my existence. I left my knight's helm in the wings and picked up my straw hat; I travelled about with the true monarchy rolled up in my trunk, while the actual monarchy displayed its frills and flounces at the Tuileries. Voltaire has all the kings attending the Carnival in Venice with Ahmed III: Ivan, Emperor of all the Russias; Charles Edward, King of England; the two Kings of Poland; Theodore, King of Corsica; and four Serene Highnesses. '*Sire, your Majesty's carriage is at Padua, and the boat is ready.... Sire, Your Majesty may leave when he wishes.... Sire, believe me, they won't give Your Majesty any more credit, nor me neither, and we may both be in gaol by nightfall.*'

As for me, I say with *Candide*: '*Gentlemen, why are all of you kings? I confess I am not and nor is Martin.*'

It was eleven at night; I hoped I had acquitted myself and obtained Madame's *leave of absence*. I was a long way out in my reckoning! Madame did not give up her aims so easily; she had not questioned me about the state of France, because, preoccupied by my resistance to her plans, she had given that precedence. Monsieur de Saint-Priest, entering my room, brought me the draft of a letter Her Royal Highness proposed to send to Charles X. 'What,' I exclaimed, '*Madame persists in her intention? She wants me to take this letter? But it is impossible, even in practice, for me to cross Germany; my passport is only valid for Switzerland and Italy.*'

‘– *You can accompany us to the Austrian border,*’ Monsieur de Saint-Priest replied; ‘*Madame will take you in her carriage; the frontier once crossed you can travel in your own calash, and arrive a day and a half before us.*’

I hurried to the Princess’ apartment; I repeated my objections: Henri V’s mother said: ‘*Do not desert me.*’ Those words ended the contest; I yielded; Madame seemed full of joy. Poor woman! She wept so! How could I resist courage, adversity, and fallen greatness, when reduced to sheltering beneath my *protection*! Another Princess, Madame la Dauphine, also thanked me for my unfruitful service: Carlsbad and Ferrara were places of exile under two different suns, and I received my life’s greatest honors there.

Madame left in the early morning, on the 19th, for Padua where she would meet me; she was to halt at Cataio, at the Duke of Modena’s. I had a hundred things I wished to see in Ferrara, palaces, paintings, manuscripts, but had to be content with Tasso’s prison. I set out a few hours after her Royal Highness. I arrived that night at Padua. I sent Hyacinthe to fetch my light baggage, fit for a German student, from Venice, and I retired sadly to sleep at the *Golden Star*, which mine had never been.

## BOOK XL

### CHAPTER 5

Padua – Tombs – Zanze's manuscript

*Padua, the 20th of September 1833.*

On Friday, the 20th of September, I spent part of the morning writing to my friends about my change of destination. The members of Madame's entourage arrived in succession.

Having nothing to do, I went out with a guide. We visited the churches of Santa Giustina and Sant' Antonio di Padua. The former, the work of Jerome of Brescia, is very majestic: from the depths of the nave one finds windows opening only at a great height, so that the church is lit without one being aware of where the light originates. This church has several fine paintings by Paolo Veronese, Liberia, Palma, etc.

Sant' Antonio di Padua (*il Santo*) presents a Greek Gothic exterior, a style peculiar to the ancient churches of Venice. St Anthony's chapel is by Jacopo Sansovino and his son Francesco: one sees it is so immediately; the decorations and design are in the style of the *loggetta* of St. Mark's bell-tower.

A *signora* in a green dress, with a straw hat covered by veil, was praying before the chapel of the saint, a servant in livery was also at prayer behind her: I assumed she was asking relief for some moral or physical distress; I was not wrong; I saw her again in the street: a woman of forty, pale, thin, walking stiffly, and with an air of suffering, I had thought her in love or afflicted with an infirmity. She emerged from the church with hope: in the space of time during which she had offered her fervent prayer to Heaven, had she forgotten her grief, could she be truly cured?

*Il Santo* is full of tombs; that of Bembo is famous. In the cloister one finds the tomb of young D'Orbesan, dead in 1595.

*'Gallus eram, Patavi morior, spes una parentum!'*

*A Frenchman I was, I died in Padua, my parent's only hope!*

D'Orbesan's French epitaph ends with a line that a great poet might wish they had written.

*'Car il n'est si beau jour qui n'amène sa nuit.'*

*For there is no day so beautiful it lacks its night.'*

Charles-Guy Patin is buried in the cathedral: his father's skill could not save him: the same who had *treated a young gentleman aged seven, who was bled thirteen times and was cured in fifteen days, as if by a miracle.*

The ancients excelled in composing funeral inscriptions: '*here lies Epictetus,*' said his stone, '*slave, forger, poor as Irus, and yet the favorite of the gods.*'

Among the moderns, Camoëns composed the most magnificent epitaph, that of John III of Portugal: '*What rests in this great sepulchre? What is denoted by the illustrious coats of arms on this massive*

*escutcheon? Nothing! For that is what all things attain...May the earth lie lightly on him now, as he once weighed heavily on the Moors.'*

My Paduan guide was a chatterer, very different from Antonio in Venice; he told me, at every opportunity, of that *great tyrant* Angelo: he announced the name of every shop and every café on every street; at the *Santo* he insisted on uttering for me the carefully preserved language of the preachers of the Adriatic. Did the tradition of such sermons derive from those songs that the fishermen of the Middle Ages (following the example of the ancient Greeks) sang to the fish as a charm? Some of those pelagian ballads in Anglo-Saxon are extant.

Of Livy, no trace; I would gladly, like the inhabitant of Cadiz, have made the journey to Rome expressly to see him while he was alive; I would gladly have sold my land, like Panormita, to buy a few fragments of his History of Rome, or, like Henri IV, offered a province for a *Decad*. There was no sign of the haberdasher of Saumur; he who once set himself in all good faith to covering some handball racquets with a manuscript of Livy, sold to him as waste paper by the apothecary of a monastery belonging to Fontevrault Abbey.

When I returned to the *Golden Star*, Hyacinthe was back from Venice. I had suggested he go to Zanze's house, and beg her pardon on my behalf for my having left without seeing her. He found the mother and daughter in a fine temper; they had just finished reading *Le mie Prigioni*. The mother said that Silvio was a *wretch*: he had written that Brollo had grabbed him, Pellico, by the leg, when he, Pellico, was standing on a table. The daughter shouted: '*Pellico is a slanderer; and he's an ingrate. After the services I rendered him, he seeks to dishonour me.*' She threatened to have the work seized and to attack the author in front of the Tribunal; she had begun a refutation of the book: Zanze is not only an artist, but a woman of letters.

Hyacinthe begged her to send me the unfinished refutation: she hesitated then gave him the manuscript: she was pale and tired from her work. The old gaoler's wife kept trying to sell him her daughter's embroidery and mosaic work. If ever I return to Venice I will conduct myself better towards Madame Brollo than I did towards Abou Gosch, leader of the hill-Arabs of Jerusalem; I promised the latter a basket of rice from Damietta, and I never sent it to him.

Here is the translation of Zanze's *commentary*:

*'The Venetian is amazed that anyone has had the audacity to pen two novelistic scenes about her created from and filled with impious lies. She strongly objects to an author who can use another person to advance his career, and who makes sport of an honest young girl who is educated and religious, esteemed, loved and highly thought of by everyone.*

*How can Silvio say that at the age of thirteen (which was my age when he says he knew me); how can he say that I visited his rooms daily when I swear to having gone there very rarely, and always accompanied by my father, mother or brother? How can he say that I confessed my love to him, I who was still at school, I who scarcely knowing anything knew neither love, nor the world; consecrated solely, as I was, to the duties of religion, and those of an obedient daughter, always occupied with my work, my only pleasure?*

*I swear that I have never spoken to him (Pellico) of love or anything else; and if I saw him occasionally, I regarded him with the eye of pity, because my heart is full of compassion for my fellow-creatures. Also I detested the place where my father worked solely through ill-luck: he once occupied a better place, but having been a fine soldier, having served the republic and then his sovereign, he was placed in that employment against his will and that of his family.*

*It is quite wrong (falsissimo) that I ever held the aforementioned Silvio's hand, either as if it were my father's, or my brother's; firstly because, though very young and lacking experience, I had received enough of an education to know my duty.*

*How can he say I embraced him, I who did not even embrace my brother: such were the scruples lodged in my heart by the education I received in the convents where my father always sent me!*

*Truly, I seem better known to him (Pellico) than he could have been to me, since I spent my days in the company of my brothers in a room neighboring his; was that not the room where my elder brothers worked and studied, and a place where I was allowed to stay with them? How can he say that I spoke to him about family matters, that I unburdened my heart to him regarding my mother's severity and my father's kindness? Far from having any reason to complain of her, she was ever my friend.*

*How can he say that he shouted at me for bringing him execrable coffee? I know no one who can say they have had the audacity to shout at me, they having all valued me as the soul of kindness.*

*I am a thousand times astonished that a man of intellect and talent has dared to vaunt such things unjustly where an honest young woman is concerned, in a way which might lose her the esteem all profess towards her, and even the love and respect of her husband, and destroy her peace and tranquility in the arms of her family and those of her daughter.*

*I find myself angry beyond measure with the author for having exhibited me in a public work in this way, and for taking the liberty of quoting my name at every opportunity.*

*And yet he has been careful to write the name Tremello instead of that of Mandricardo, the name of the person who carried messages for him. And the latter I could have told him more about, because I knew how faithless he was and self-interested. He would have sacrificed anyone for food and drink; he was disloyal to all those who through their misfortune were in poverty, and who were unable to grease his palm as he wished. He treated those unfortunates worse than beasts; but when I saw him, I reproached him and told my father about him, my heart being unable to endure such treatment of my fellow-creatures. He (Mandricardo) was only kind to those who gave him buona mancia (fat rewards) and gave him plenty to eat; may Heaven forgive him! But he will have to render account for his evil actions towards his fellow-creatures, and for the hatred he showed me because I remonstrated with him. For as unworthy an object as that, Silvio shows concern, while for me, who do not merit being so exhibited, he has shown not the least regard.*

*But I know where to turn for true justice; I do not agree to being, I do not wish to be, named in public, whether for good or evil.*

*I am happy in the arms of a husband who loves me so, and who is true and virtuously cherished in return, well knowing the integrity not only of my conduct but also of my feelings. And I will be, despite*

*the man who sees fit to exploit me in the interests of his writings, which are unfounded and full of untruths...!*

*Silvio will forgive my fury, but he should have expected it, once I clearly knew his conduct in regard to me.*

*This is the recompense for all my family has done, treating him (Pellico) with the humanity that every creature condemned to like disgrace deserves, and without regard to the orders given concerning him.*

*And yet I swear that all he has said about me is false. Perhaps Silvio may have been badly informed about me, but he cannot truthfully repeat such false things, solely to have a better story on which to found his book.*

*I would say more; but my domestic tasks will not allow me to waste any more time. I can only thank Signor Silvio for his book, and for having created in my breast, innocent of fault, continual anxiety and perhaps endless unhappiness.'*

This literal translation is far from rendering the feminine verve, foreign grace, and lively naivety of the text; the dialect Zanze uses exhales an earthy perfume impossible to transfuse into another language. This *apologia* with its incorrect phrasing, nebulous, and incomplete, like the obscure edges of a group of figures by Albani, this manuscript, with its defective or Venetian handwriting, is a monument to Greek womanhood, but that of the age in which bishops of Thessaly sang the love of Theagenes and Chariclea. I prefer the little gaoler's two pages to all the dialogues of the great Isotta who nevertheless pleaded for Eve against Adam, as Zanze pleaded on her own behalf against Pellico. Furthermore, my lovely Provencal compatriots of former days are recalled by this daughter of Venice through the idiom of those intermediate generations in whose houses the language of the conquered is not yet wholly dead, and the language of the conquerors not yet wholly formed.

Which of Pellico or Zanze is right? What is the essence of the argument? It is about a simple exchange of confidences, a questionable embrace, which, ultimately perhaps was never meant for him who received it. The married woman chooses not to recognize herself in the delightful girl whom the prisoner depicts; but she contests the matter with so much charm that she proves it by denying it. The portrait of Zanze in the plaintiff's memoir is so like, that one rediscovers it in the defendant: the same feelings of religiosity, humanity, the same reserve, the same tone of intimacy, the same gentle and tender lack of method.

Zanze is full of force when she affirms, with passionate candor, that she would not have dared embrace her own brother, far less Monsieur Pellico. Zanze's filial piety is extremely touching, when she transforms Brollo into a former Republican soldier, reduced to the level of a gaoler *per sola combazione*: solely by ill-fortune.

Zanze is quite admirable in that phrase: Pellico had concealed the name of a disreputable man, and yet had no fear in revealing that of an innocent creature full of compassion for the wretched prisoners.

Zanze is not seduced by the idea of being immortalized in an immortal work; that idea never even enters her mind: she is simply astonished at the man's indiscretion; that man, as the offended girl believed, sacrificed a girl's reputation for the sake of his work, without concern for the trouble he might cause, only

seeking to tell a tale for the benefit of his fame. A palpable fear overcomes Zante; might the prisoner's revelations inspire her husband's jealousy?

The paragraph that ends the *apologia* is moving and eloquent:

*'I can only thank Signor Silvio for his book, and for having created in my breast, innocent of fault, continual anxiety and perhaps endless unhappiness: una continua inquietudine e forse una perpetua infelicità.'*

Over these last lines written in a tired hand, tears have been visibly shed.

I, a stranger to trial proceedings, wish to omit nothing. I therefore maintain that the Zanze of *Mie Prigioni* is Zanze according to the *Muses*, and that the Zanze of the *apologia* is the true Zanze according to history. I ignore the defect of height that I seemed to remember in the daughter of a former soldier of the Republic; I was wrong: the *Angelica* of Silvio's prison is formed like the stem of a reed, like the shoot of a palm-tree. I declare to her that no one in my *Memoirs* pleases me so much, not even excluding my *sylph*. Between Pellico and Zanze herself, with the aid of the manuscript deposited with me, it will be a great wonder if the *Veneziana* does not go down to posterity! Yes, Zanze, you will take your place among the female shades born about the poet, when he dreams to the sound of his lyre. Those delicate shades are orphans of a vanished harmony and a reverie that has ended, still living between earth and heaven, inhabiting both regions at once. *'The beauty of paradise would not be complete if you were not there to grace it'* sings a troubadour to his mistress absent in death.



## BOOK XL

### CHAPTER 6

Unexpected news – The Governor of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia

*Padua, the 20th of September 1833.*

History has just arrived to strangle romance. I had barely finished reading Zanze's defence, at *The Golden Star*, when Monsieur Saint-Priest entered my room saying: '*Here is news.*' A letter from Her Royal Highness informed us that the Governor of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia had been presented to her at Cataio and had announced to the Princess the impossibility of his allowing her to continue her journey. Madame requested my immediate departure.

At that instant an aide-de-camp of the Governor knocked at my door and asked if it would suit me to receive the General. In response I went to His Excellency's apartment, as he was staying like me at *The Golden Star*.

The Governor was an excellent fellow.

*'Know, Monsieur le Vicomte,' he said, 'that my orders concerning Madame la Duchesse de Berry were dated the 28th of August: her Royal Highness tells me she has passports of a later date and a letter from the Emperor. Behold, on the 17th of this month I receive a dispatch in the middle of the night: a dispatch, dated the 15th, from Vienna, telling me to execute my orders of the 28th August, and not allow Madame la Duchesse de Berry to travel beyond Udine or Trieste. Witness, my dear and illustrious Vicomte, the extent of my misfortune! To arrest a princess I admire and respect, if she will not conform to my sovereign's wishes! For the Princess did not welcome me; she told me she would do as she pleased. Dear Vicomte, if you could persuade Her Royal Highness to remain in Venice or Trieste while I await fresh instructions from the Court? I will stamp your passport for Prague; you can go there swiftly with experiencing the least impediment, and you can arrange everything; since my Court will certainly only yield to a formal request. Render me this service, I beg you.'*

I was touched by the candor of the noble officer. Comparing the date of the 15th of September with my departure from Paris on the 3rd I was struck by an idea: my interview with Madame and the coincidence of Henri V's majority may well have frightened Louis Philippe's cabinet. A dispatch from Monsieur de Broglie, sent with a note from Monsieur le Comte de Saint-Aulaire, may have decided the Vienna Chancellery in favor of a renewal of the ban of the 28th of August. It is possible that I guess wrongly and that the event I suspect did not take place; but two *gentlemen*, both Peers of France under Louis XVIII, both violators of their oath, were worthy of being the instruments, after all, of so ungenerous a policy against a woman, and the mother of the legitimate king. Is it so astonishing that the France of today increasingly confirms the high opinion in which it holds the people of the courts of former times?

I took care not to show my private thoughts. Persecution had altered my feelings on the subject of the trip to Prague; I was now so desirous of working alone in my royal mistress' interest, that I had opposed undertaking it with her when the roads were open to her. I concealed my true sentiments, and wishing to maintain the Governor's good will in granting me a passport, I added to his loyal disquiet; I replied:

*‘Monsieur le Gouverneur, you are proposing what is difficult for me. You know Madame la Duchesse de Berry; she is not the woman to be led where one wishes; if she has made up her mind nothing will change it. Who knows? Perhaps it suits her to be arrested by the Emperor of Austria, her uncle, since she has previously been thrown in a dungeon by Louis-Philippe another uncle! Legitimate kings and illegitimate kings act in the same way. Louis-Philippe dethroned Henri IV’s descendant, while Francis II will prevent a mother being reunited with her son; Prince von Metternich will replace General Bugeaud in his role wonderfully well.’*

The Governor was beside himself: *‘Oh! Vicomte, how right you are! Such propaganda everywhere! Youth will no longer listen to us! No more in Venetia than in Lombardy or Piedmont.’ – ‘Or the Romagna!’* I cried, *‘or Naples! Or Sicily! Or on the banks of the Rhine! Or anywhere!’ – ‘Oh, oh oh!’* cried the Governor, *‘things cannot remain so: always sword in hand, an army in arms, without fighting, France and England setting our people an example! Now, after the Carbonari, Young Italy! Young Italy! Who ever heard of such a thing?’*

*‘– Sir,’* I said, *‘I will bend all my efforts to persuading Madame to grant you a few days grace; have the goodness to grant me a passport: that kindness alone may prevent Her Royal Highness from pursuing her initial resolution.’*

*‘– I will take it upon myself,’* the Governor told me, having been reassured, *‘to allow Madame to pass through Venice to reach Trieste; if she dawdles a little on the way, she will reach the latter city along with the orders you go to seek, and we will be saved. The representative in Padua will grant you a visa for Prague, in exchange for which you will leave him a letter announcing Her Royal Highness’ resolve not to travel beyond Trieste. What an age we live in! What an age! I am pleased to be old, my dear and illustrious Vicomte, so I will not be forced to see what is coming next.’*

In insisting on the passport, I reproached myself silently for no doubt taking advantage of the Governor’s utter lack of guile, since he might well be more culpable in letting me enter Bohemia than if he had yielded to the Duchesse de Berry. My whole anxiety was lest some idiot in the Italian police made difficulties regarding the *visa*. When the representative in Padua came to see me, I found about him the look of the secretariat, an air of protocol, the mark of the prefecture as if he had been nurtured by French administration. That talent for bureaucracy made me tremble. The moment he told me he had been a commissary in the allied army in the Bouches-du-Rhône department, my hopes revived: I attacked my enemy by swiftly enhancing his self-esteem. I declared that the strict discipline of the troops stationed in Provence had been noticeable. I knew nothing about it, but the representative, replying with overflowing admiration, hastened to expedite my business: the moment I had obtained my *visa* I ceased to worry.

## BOOK XL

### CHAPTER 7

A letter from Madame to Charles X and Henri V – Monsieur de Montbel –  
My note to the Governor – I leave for Prague

*Padua, the 20th of September 1833.*

The Duchesse de Berry returned from Cataio at nine in the evening: she seemed very animated; as for me, the more at peace I had been, the more I wished for combat: if people attacked us, we must defend ourselves. I proposed, half in jest, to Her Royal Highness, that I would take her to Prague in disguise, and the *two of us* would kidnap Henri V. It only remained to consider where we might deposit our prize. Italy was not suitable because of the weakness of its princes; the absolutist grand monarchies could not be considered for a thousand reasons. Holland and England remained: I preferred the former because along with a constitutional government it possessed an able king.

We deferred this extreme measure; we fell back on more reasonable ones: the weight of the whole affair fell on my shoulders. I would leave alone with a letter from MADAME: I would demand the certificate of majority; following the grandparents' reply, I would send a courier to Her Royal Highness who would await my dispatch in Trieste. MADAME added a letter for Henri to that for the old king; I would hand it to the young prince dependent on the circumstances. The address on the note was itself a protest against the reservations expressed in Prague. Here are the letter and the note:

*‘Ferrara, 19th of September 1833.*

*My dear father-in-law in a moment as crucial to Henri's future as this one, allow me to address you in complete confidence. I am not relying solely on my own ideas regarding so important a subject; in this grave matter, I have chosen, on the contrary, to consult those who have shown me most loyalty and devotion. Monsieur de Chateaubriand is naturally to be found at their head.*

*He has confirmed what I already thought, that in France all the royalists, with regard to the 29th of September, consider a decree certifying Henri's majority and rights, as indispensable. If the faithful M\*\*\* is with you at the moment, I invoke him as witness that I know the situation to be in accord with what I say.*

*Monsieur de Chateaubriand will explain his ideas on the question of the decree to the King; he says with reason, it seems to me, that it should simply certify Henri's majority and not be a manifesto: I think you will approve his manner of viewing the matter. Finally, my dear father-in-law, I leave it to him to obtain your attention and bring about a decision on this vital point. I am occupied with much more, I assure you, than what concerns me, and the interests of my Henri, which are those of France, take precedence over mine. I think I have shown him that I know how to expose myself to danger on his behalf, and that I do not shrink from any sacrifice; he will find me ever the same.*

*Monsieur de Montbel handed me your letter on his arrival: I read it with a lively sense of gratitude; to see you again, to embrace my children, will always be my dearest wish. Monsieur de Montbel will have written to you saying that I have done all you asked; I hope you will be satisfied with my eagerness to please you and display my respect and tenderness towards you. I have now only one*

*desire, to be in Prague for the 29th of September, and, though my health is much altered, I hope to be there. In any event, Monsieur de Chateaubriand will precede me. I beg the King to receive him with kindness and to hear what he will say on my behalf. Believe, my dear father, in all my deepest sentiments, etc.*

*P.S. Padua, the 20th of September. – My letter was complete when I was told of the order that I was not to continue my journey: my surprise matches my sorrow. I cannot believe that such an order could emanate from the heart of the King; my enemies alone must have dictated it. What will France say? And how Philippe will triumph! I can only insist on the departure of the Vicomte de Chateaubriand, and charge him with saying to the King what it is too painful for me to write to him at this instant.’*

Note addressed to: ‘*HIS MAJESTY HENRI V, MY VERY DEAR SON, PRAGUE.*’

*‘Padua, the 20th of September 1833.*

*I was on the brink of arriving in Prague to embrace you, my dear Henri, when an unforeseen obstacle halted my journey.*

*I am sending Monsieur de Chateaubriand in my place to handle your affairs and mine. Trust, my dear friend, in what he says to you on my behalf and have faith in my most tender affection. In embracing you and your sister, I am*

*Your affectionate mother and friend,*

*CAROLINE’*

Monsieur de Montbel reached Padua from Rome in the midst of our discussions. The little court of Padua was in a sulk; it blamed Monsieur de Blacas for the order from Vienna. Monsieur de Montbel, a very sensible gentleman, had no recourse but to take refuge with me, though he feared me; on seeing this colleague of Monsieur de Polignac’s, I told myself that he had written, without realizing it, the history of the Duc de Reichstadt, and had admired the Archdukes, all of two hundred miles away from Prague, the place of exile of the Duc de Bordeaux; if he, Monsieur de Montbel, had chosen to throw Saint Louis’ monarchy out of the window along with the monarchies of this earthly world, it was a minor event that he had not anticipated. I was gracious towards le Comte de Montbel; I spoke to him about the Coliseum. He returned to Vienna to place himself at Prince von Metternich’s disposal and serve as an intermediary in any correspondence with Monsieur de Blacas. At eleven, I wrote the letter we had agreed upon to the Governor: I was careful of Madame’s dignity, not committing her Royal Highness in any way, and preserving her complete freedom of action.

*‘Padua, this 20th of September 1833.*

*Monsieur le Gouverneur,*

*Her Royal Highness, Madame la Duchesse de Berry wishes to conform, for the moment, to the orders which you have communicated. Her intention is to travel to Venice on her way to Trieste; there, after receiving the information which I shall have the honor of sending her, she will decide further.*

*Accept, I beg you, my most sincere thanks, and the assurance of my deepest regard, with which I am.*

*Monsieur le Gouverneur,*

*Your very humble and obedient servant,*

*CHATEAUBRIAND'*

The representative, on reading this letter, was quite content. Once MADAME had left the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia he and the Governor were no longer responsible for her; the actions and intentions of the Duchesse de Berry at Trieste only concerned the authorities of Istria or Frioul; it was for each to rid themselves of the problem: there is a certain game where one hastens to pass a piece of burning paper to one's neighbor.

At ten, I took leave of the Princess: she gave the fate of herself and her son into my hands. She made me a king of France after a fashion. There was a village in Belgium that once gave me four votes in their search for a successor to mount the throne that Philippe's son-in-law occupies. I said to MADAME: '*I submit to Your Royal Highness' will, but I fear to ruin her hopes. I may obtain nothing in Prague.*' She pushed me towards the door: '*Go, you can do it.*'

At eleven, I climbed into my carriage: it was a wet night. It felt as though I was returning to Venice since I took the road to Mestre; I would rather have been going to see Zanze again than Charles X.

**End of Book XL**

## BOOK XLI

### CHAPTER 1

JOURNAL FROM PADUA TO PRAGUE, 20TH TO 26TH SEPTEMBER 1833: – Conegliano – A translation of *Le Dernier Abencérage* – Udine – The Countess Samoilova – Monsieur de La Ferronays – A priest – Carinthia – The Drava – A little peasant – Forges – Lunch at the Hamlet of St Michael

I was sorry, on passing Mestre towards the end of the night, that I was unable to visit the shore: perhaps a distant lighthouse among the last lagoons might have indicated the loveliest island of the ancient world, as a little fire revealed the first islands of the New World to Christopher Columbus. It was at Mestre that I embarked for Venice on my first visit in 1806: *fugit aetas*: time flies.

I lunched at Conegliano: there I was complimented by the friends of a lady who had translated *L'Abencérage*, and indeed resembled Blanca: '*He saw a young woman emerge, dressed almost like the Gothic queens carved on the monuments in our ancient abbeys...a black mantilla was thrown over her head; with her left hand she held it tightly beneath her chin like a hood, so that nothing could be seen of her face but her large eyes and rosy mouth.*' I am repaying my debt to the translator of my Spanish reveries, by reproducing her portrait here.

While I regained my carriage, a priest harangued me regarding *Le Génie du Christianisme*. I traversed the theatre of victories which led Bonaparte to invade our freedoms.

Udine is a fine town: I saw a portico there which imitated the Doge's Palace. I dined at the inn, in the room which had just been occupied by Countess Samoilova; it was still in a complete state of disarray. Is that niece of Princess Bagration, *another victim of time's injuries*, still as lovely as she was in Rome in 1829, when she sang so beautifully at my concerts? What breeze blew this flower once more beneath my footsteps? What breath disturbs that cloud? Daughter of the North, you delight in life; hasten: the melodies that charmed you are already fading; your days are shorter than the Polar day.

In the hotel register I found the name of my noble friend, the Comte de La Ferronays, returning from Prague to Naples while I was journeying from Padua to Prague. The Comte de La Ferronays, my compatriot twice over since he is both a Breton and from Saint Malo, entwined his political destiny with mine: he was ambassador to St Petersburg when I was Foreign Minister in Paris; he occupied the latter role, when I became an ambassador under his direction. Sent to Rome, I gave in my resignation on the advent of Polignac's ministry, and La Ferronays inherited my embassy. Monsieur de Blacas' brother-in-law, he is as poor as the former is rich; he has left the Peerage and abandoned his diplomatic career since the July Revolution; everyone esteems him, and no one hates him, because his character is pure and his spirit temperate. In his latest negotiations in Prague, he allowed himself to be taken by surprise by Charles X, who is at the end of his life. Old people delight in secrecy, having nothing of value to display. Except for my old King, I think they should drown those who are no longer young, starting indeed with me, and a dozen of my friends.

From Udine, I took the Villach road: I travelled to Bohemia via Salzburg and Linz. Before attacking the Alps, I heard the sound of bells and saw an illuminated bell-tower in the plain. I interrogated the coachman with the help of a German from Strasbourg, working as an Italian-speaking guide in Venice, whom Hyacinthe had acquired to interpret Slavic in Prague. The celebrations I was enquiring about were due to a priest who had newly entered Holy Orders; he was to say his first Mass the following day. How

many times would those bells, which today proclaimed the indissoluble union of man with God, call that man to the sanctuary and at what hour would those same bells ring out above his coffin?

22nd of September

I slept almost all night, to the roar of torrents, and woke at daybreak, on the 22nd, among the mountains. The valleys of Carinthia are pleasant, but lack character: the peasants do not dress in national costume; some of the women wear furs like Hungarians; others have white headdresses on the back of their heads, or a blue woolen bonnet padded at the sides, somewhere between an Ottoman turban and the buttoned hat of a Talapoin Buddhist monk.

I changed horses at Villach. On leaving the post-station, I followed a large valley beside the Drava, a new acquaintance for me: by dint of crossing rivers I will at last reach my final shore. Lander has just explored the Niger Delta; that resilient traveller has vanished into eternity at the very moment of ascertaining for us that the mysterious African river merges its waves with the Ocean.

At the fall of night, we were almost halted at the village of Paternion: after greasing the wheels, a peasant tightened a wheel-nut in the wrong direction, with such force that it was impossible to free it. All the able men in the village, led by the blacksmith, failed in their attempts. A lad of fourteen or fifteen left the crowd then returned with a pair of pliers, pushed aside the workers, wound a brass wire round the nut, gripped it with his pliers, and turning it in the direction of the thread removed the nut with a minimum of effort: there was a universal *vivat*. Was the boy not a kind of Archimedes? The queen of a tribe of Eskimos, that woman who drew a chart of the Polar Regions for Captain Parry, watched his sailors welding pieces of iron on a forge with great attention, and through her intellect advanced the development of her race.

During the night of the 22nd and 23rd, I traversed a dense mass of mountains; they continued to loom in front of me as far as Salzburg; and yet those ramparts did not protect the Roman Empire. The author of the *Essais*, speaking of the Tyrol, says, with his usual lively imagination: '*It was like a robe that we only saw folded, that, if it had been spread out, would have formed a large country.*' The hills among which I wound were like rock-falls from the higher chain, which, if covering a vast terrain would have created little Alp displaying various features of the great ones.

Cascades descended all about us, leaping over their stony beds, like Pyrenean mountain streams. The road passed through gorges barely navigable by a calash. Near Gemünd, water-driven forges joined the noise of their hammers to that of the sluices; streams of sparks escaped from their chimneys into the black pine forests and the night.

At each breath of the bellows over the coals, the exposed roofs of the building were suddenly illuminated, like the cupola of St. Peter's Rome on a feast day. In the Karch range, three pairs of oxen were added to our team of horses. Our long train looked like a mobile bridge over the flowing torrents and inundated ravines: the Tauern range opposite was cloaked in snow.

On the 23rd, at nine in the morning, I arrived in the pretty hamlet of St. Michael, at the end of a valley. Tall and lovely daughters of Austria served me a proper breakfast in a little two-windowed room looking out on meadows and the village church. The cemetery, surrounding the church, was only separated from me by a rustic courtyard. Wooden crosses, set in a semicircle, from which were hung holy water stoups,

rose from the lawn with its old tombs: five graves with no grass growing on them indicated five new sleepers. A few ditches, like the beds in a vegetable garden were decorated with marigolds in full flower; wagtails chased grasshoppers in this garden of the dead. A very old crippled woman, leaning on her crutch, crossed the cemetery and brought back a broken cross; perhaps the law allowed her to take the cross for her own grave; dead wood, in the forests, belongs to whoever gathers it.

*'There do inglorious poets sleep unknown,  
Mute orators, conquerors without a throne.'*

Would not the child in Prague sleep more soundly here, without his crown, than in the chamber of the Louvre where his father's body was laid?

My solitary breakfast, in the company of those travellers lying at rest beneath my window, would have been to my taste if a recent death had not troubled me: I had heard cries from the bird served up for my meal. Poor chick! She had been so happy five minutes before my arrival! She had pecked about amongst the grass, vegetables and flowers; she had scurried about among the flocks of goats down from the mountain; this evening she would have slept at sunset, still young enough to rest beneath her mother's wing.

The horses hitched, I climbed into my calash again, surrounded by the girls, and accompanied by the lads, from the inn; they seemed happy to have met me, though they had no idea who I was and would never see me again: they sent so many blessings after me! I never weary of this Germanic cordiality. Every peasant you meet raises his hat to you and wishes you a hundred fine things: in France they do not even salute the dead; liberty and equality are renowned for their insolence; there is no empathy between individuals; to envy whoever travels with a modicum of style, and be ready, arms akimbo, to fight anyone wearing a new frock-coat or a clean shirt, that is the characteristic mark of our national freedom: of course we spend our days in antechambers suffering rebuffs from some upstart peasant. That does not inhibit our powers of intellect, or prevent us conquering weapons in hand; but ways of life are not created *a priori*: we have been a great military nation for eight centuries; fifty years cannot alter that; we cannot lose the true love of liberty. As soon as we pause for a moment under some transitory government, the old monarchy springs again from its stock, the old spirit of France reappears: we are courtiers and soldiers, nothing more.



## BOOK XLI

### CHAPTER 2

The Tauern Pass – A Cemetery – Atala: how altered – Sunrise – Salzburg – A military review – Happy peasants – Vöcklabruck – Plancoët and my aunt – Night – German towns and Italian towns – Linz

23rd and 24th of September 1833.

The final range of mountains enclosing the province of Salzburg overlooks arable land. The Tauern possesses glaciers; its plateau resembles the Alpine plateaux, particularly that of Saint Gothard. On this plateau covered with reddish frozen moss, there is a Calvary: an ever-present consolation, an eternal sanctuary for the unfortunate. Round this Calvary are interred the victims who have perished among the snows.

What were the hopes of such travellers passing this place like me when the storm surprised them? Who were they? Who wept for them? How can they rest there, so far from their relatives, their country, hearing each winter the roaring of the tempests whose blast tears them from the earth? Yet they sleep at the foot of the Cross; Christ, their sole companion, their special friend, fixed to the sacred tree, leans towards them, coated by the same frost that whitens their graves: in the celestial house he shall present them to his Father and warm them again at his breast.

The descent from the Tauern is lengthy, difficult, and perilous; I was charmed by it: it recalled, now by its waterfalls and wooden bridges, now by the narrowing of its chasm, the valley of the *Pont-d'Espagne* at Cauterets, or the slope of the Simplon at Domo d'Ossola; though it did not lead to Granada or Naples. There are no gleaming lakes or orange groves below: it is idle taking so much trouble merely to reach potato fields.

At the post-station, half-way down, I found myself among family at the inn: the adventures of *Atala*, in six engravings, decorated the wall. My daughter never suspected I would pass by, and I never expected to see so dear an object beside a torrent called, I think, the *Dragon*. She was quite ugly, quite old, quite altered, poor *Atala*! On her head were tall feathers and round her lower body a short tight skirt, in the style of the female savages at the Théâtre de la Gaîté. Vanity silvers everything; I swelled with pride before my creation, in the depths of Carinthia, as Cardinal Mazarin did before the paintings in his gallery. I had a yearning to say to my host: '*I created her!*' I had to be torn away from my first-born, less difficult a process however than on that island in the Ohio.

Till Werfen nothing caught my attention, except perhaps the manner in which they dry the late harvest: they plant fifteen to twenty foot long poles in the ground; they wind the cut hay, without crushing it too much, around these poles; it dries there while darkening. At a distance, the pillars look exactly like cypress trees or trophies planted in memory of the flowers cut in these valleys.

24th of September, Tuesday

Germany chose to take her revenge for my ill humor with her. In the plain of Salzburg, on the morning of the 24th, the sun appeared east of the mountains I was leaving behind me; some rocky peaks in the west were gently illuminated by its first glow. Darkness still covered the plain, which was half green, half ploughed, and from which a mist rose, like the steam of human sweat. Salzburg Castle, elevated on the

summit of the little hill which overlooks the city, inlaid its white relief on the blue sky. As the sun rose, from the heart of the fresh exhalation of dew emerged avenues, clumps of trees, red brick houses, cottages rendered with brilliant whitewash, and towers from the Middle Ages scarred and pierced, time's aged champions, wounded in head and chest, sole survivors on the battlefield of the centuries. The light over the landscape was the violet color of autumn crocuses, which open at this time and with which the fields along the Salz were sown. Flocks of crows, leaving the ivy and clefts of the ruins, descended to the fallows; their glistening wings were glazed with rose in the sheen of dawn.

It was the feast day of Saint Rupert the patron saint of Salzburg. The farmers marched, dressed in village fashion: their blond hair and snowy brows were covered by a kind of gilded helmet, which suits the Germans well. As I passed through the city, which was clean and lovely, I saw two or three thousand infantrymen in a meadow; a general, accompanied by his staff, was reviewing them. The white ranks crisscrossing the green grass, the weapons glinting in the rising sun, were a sight worthy of those people described or rather sung by Tacitus: the Teuton Mars was offering a sacrifice to Aurora. What were my Venetian gondoliers doing at that moment? They were rejoicing like swallows in the rebirth of day from night, and preparing to skim the surface of the water; then the joys of night would return, barcarolles, and the business of love. To every nation its fate: power to some; pleasure to others: the Alps separate them.

From Salzburg to Linz is fertile country, the horizon on the right indented with mountains. Tall clumps of beech and pine, oases rustic and identical, surrounded by varied and expert cultivation. Flocks of various kinds, hamlets, churches, oratories, and crosses adorned and animated the route.

Having emerged from the glow of Saint Rupert's feast day (festivals among men are brief and do not extend far), we found everyone in the fields, occupied with the autumn sowing or harvesting potatoes. Their rural population was better dressed, more polite, and seemed happier than ours. Let us not disturb the order, peace, and simple virtues they enjoy under the pretext of substituting political benefits for them which are not conceived or felt in the same way by all. The whole of humanity understands the joys of the hearth, family affections, life's abundance, the simplicity of feeling and religion.

The Frenchman, so in love with woman, easily ignores her, lost as he is in a multitude of cares and labors; the German cannot live without his companion; he employs her and takes her with him everywhere, to war as to work, to the feast as to the funeral.

In Germany, even the beasts of the field have the temperate character of their reasonable masters. When you travel, the features of the animals prove interesting to an observer. You can judge the habits and passions of a region's inhabitants by the gentleness or viciousness, the wildness or tameness, the air of contentment or sadness of that part of the animal kingdom that God has given into our hands.

An accident to the calash obliged me to stop at Vöcklabruck. Roaming round the inn a back door gave me access to a canal. Beyond it were meadows striped with pieces of unbleached cloth. A river curving beneath wooded hills, served these meadows as a belt. Something reminded me of the village of Plancoët, where happiness was granted me in my infancy. Shades of my old relatives, I did not expect you on those shores! You seem nearer to me because I am nearer to the grave, your refuge; we shall meet again there. My dear aunt, do you still sing, on the banks of Lethe, your song of the *Sparrow-Hawk* and the *Warbler*? Have you met the fickle Trémigon among the dead, as Dido encountered Aeneas in the land of spirits?

I left Vöcklabruck as the day ended; the sun entrusted me to his sister's hands: a double glow of an indefinable color and fluidity. Soon the moon reigned alone: she wished to renew our conversation of the Haselbach forest; but I was not in accord with her. I preferred Venus, who rose at two a.m. on the 25th; she was as lovely as she was when I contemplated her and entreated her in those dawns over the waters of Greece.

Leaving many unknown groves, streams, and valleys, to right and left, I passed through Lambach, Wels, and Neubau, new little towns with unroofed houses, in the Italian style. Music was being played in one of these houses; young women were at the windows: things would not have been thus in the days of Maroboduus.

The streets in German towns are wide, aligned like the tents in camp or the ranks of a battalion; the market places are vast, the parade grounds spacious: there is a lack of sunlight, and everything takes place in public.

In Italian towns, the streets are narrow and tortuous, the market places tiny, the parade grounds constricted: there is a lack of shade and everything takes place in private.

At Linz, my passport was stamped without problem.

## BOOK XLI

### CHAPTER 3

The Danube – Waldmünchen – Woods – Combourg – Lucile – Travellers – Prague

25th and 26th of September 1833.

I crossed the Danube at three in the morning: I had said to it in summer what I no longer found to say to it in autumn; they were no longer the same waters, nor were my days the same. I left my excellent village of Waldmünchen with its herds of pigs, the swine-herd Eumaeus, and the peasant girl who gazed at me over her father's shoulder, far to the left. The ditch of corpses in its cemetery would have been filled in; the dead eaten by thousands of worms for having had the honor of being human.

Monsieur and Madame de Bauffremont, having arrived at Linz, were a few hours ahead of me; they were themselves preceded by several royalists: bearing messages of peace, they believed Madame to be travelling tranquilly behind them, while I was following them like *Discord*, with news of war.

Princesse de Bauffremont, née Montmorency, was going to Bustehrad to pay her compliments to the *Kings* of France nés *Bourbons*: nothing could be more natural.

On the 25th, at nightfall, I entered woodland. The crows were calling in the air; dense flocks of them wheeled above the trees whose summits they were preparing to adorn. There, I returned to my early youth: I saw again the crows in the mall at Combourg; I thought I was back again with my family in the old castle: O memories, you pass through the heart like a sword!

O, my Lucile, so many years separate us! Now a host of my days has passed, and, in vanishing, allows me to see your image more clearly.

I reached Tabor at night: its square, surrounded by arcades, seemed immense; but moonlight is deceptive.

On the morning of the 26th, fog covered us in its boundless solitude. About six, I seemed to be passing between two lakes. I was only a few miles from Prague.

The fog lifted. The approach to the city by the Linz road is more interesting than that from Regensburg; the countryside is less flat. You see villages, and chateaux with plantations and ponds. I met a woman, a pious and resigned figure, overwhelmed by the weight of an enormous basket; two old fruiterers laying out their apples beside a ditch; a girl and her lad sitting on the grass, the young man smoking, the girl happy, next to her friend by day, in his arms at night; children playing at the cottage door with their cats or driving the geese to the common; and turkeys in a cage off to Prague like me for Henri V's coming of age; then a shepherd sounding his horn, while Hyacinthe, Baptiste, the translator from Venice, and His Excellency, jolted along in our patched-up calash: such are life's destinies. I would not give a *sou* for the best of them.

Bohemia offered me nothing new; my thoughts were fixed on Prague.

I entered Prague on the 26th at four in the afternoon. I stopped at the Hôtel des Bains. I did not see the young Saxon servant girl; she had returned to Dresden to soothe Raphael's exiled paintings with the songs of Italy.

Prague, the 29th of September 1833.

Two days after my arrival in Prague (the 28th) I sent Hyacinthe with a letter to Madame la Duchesse de Berry, whom according to my calculations he should find in Trieste. The letter to the Princess said: 'that I had found the Royal Family leaving for Leoben, that young Frenchmen were arriving for the coming-of-age of Henri V and that their King would evade them, that I had seen Madame la Dauphine, and that she had invited me to go at once to Bustehrad where Charles X might shortly be found; that I had not seen Mademoiselle because she was a little indisposed, that they had allowed me into her room where the shutters were closed, and that she had held out her burning hand to me in the darkness while begging me to save them all: that I has gone to Bustehrad, that I had seen Monsieur de Blacas and talked with him about the declaration of Henri V's majority; that entering the King's room I had found him asleep, and that having then presented Madame la Duchesse de Berry's letter to him he had seemed quite hostile to my august client; that however the little decree I had drafted regarding the majority seemed to please him.'

The letter ended with this paragraph:

*'Now Madame, I must not hide from you that there is much wrong here. Our enemies would smile if they could see us debating a king without a kingdom, a scepter which is only a stick on which we lean, during the pilgrimage, which will probably be lengthy, of our exile. Your son's education is full of deficiencies, and I see no chance of them being remedied. I am returning to the poor folk whom Madame de Chateaubriand nurtures; there, I will always be at your command. If ever you take sole charge of Henri, and continue to believe that precious charge might be placed in my hands, I would be as pleased as I would be honored to devote the remainder of my life to him, but I could not accept so fearful a responsibility except on condition of being, under your counsel, entirely free in my decisions and thoughts, and located on independent territory, beyond the circle of absolute monarchy.'*

With the letter was enclosed this copy of my draft declaration of majority:

*'We, Henri V by name, having arrived at the age at which the laws of the kingdom have fixed the royal majority, wish the first action of that majority to be a solemn protest against the usurpation of the throne by Louis-Philippe, Duc d'Orléans. In consequence, and on the advice of our counsellors, we have issued this decree to maintain our rights and those of the French: given this thirtieth day of September, in the year of grace eighteen thirty three.'*

## BOOK XLI

### CHAPTER 4

Madame de Gontaut – Young France – Madame la Dauphine – Journey to Bustehrad

*Prague, the 30th of September 1833.*

My letter to Madame la Duchesse de Berry indicated the broad facts but did not enter into detail.

When I saw Madame de Gontaut amidst half-filled cases and open trunks, she threw herself on my neck, sobbing: ‘*Save me! Save us!*’ – ‘*Save you: from what, Madame? I have just arrived. I know nothing.*’ The Hradschin was deserted; one would have thought these the days of July and the abandonment of the Tuileries, as if revolution dogged the steps of the exiled race.

Various young men had come to congratulate Henri on his majority; several were under threat of death-warrants; a few, wounded in the Vendée, almost all of them poverty-stricken, had been obliged to club together even to carry their expression of loyalty to Prague. An immediate order had closed the Bohemian frontier to them. Those who reached Bustehrad were only received after much difficulty; etiquette barred their passage, as the Gentlemen of the Chamber at Saint-Cloud had defended the door of Charles X’s room while the Revolution entered through the window. These young men were told that the King had gone, that he would not be in Prague on the 29th. Horses were in readiness, the Royal Family’s luggage was packed. If the travellers did at last obtain permission to utter hasty congratulations, they were heard with fear. The loyal group were not even offered a glass of water; no one acknowledged them at the table of the orphan they had come so far to see; they were reduced to drinking Henri’s health at an inn. The family fled before a handful of men from the Vendée, as they scattered before a hundred heroes of July.

And what was the pretext for this flight? They were going to meet Madame la Duchesse de Berry; they had fixed a meeting with the Princess on the highroad to allow her to see her daughter and son surreptitiously. Was she not the guilty one? She was idly insisting on Henri claiming his title. To express the situation in its simplest form, they displayed to the eyes of Austria and France (if France even noticed these nonentities) a spectacle that rendered the Legitimacy, already so far gone, a grief to its friends and an object of calumny to its enemies.

Madame la Dauphine understood the deficiencies in Henri V’s education, and it drove her to tears, as dew falls from heaven at night. The brief audience which she accorded me did not allow her to speak of my letter from Paris of the 30th of June: she looked at me in a moving manner.

Given the very severity of Providence, any means of rescue seemed lost: exile had separated the orphan from what threatened to ruin him at the Tuileries; in the school of adversity, he might have been raised under the direction of men of the new social order, fit for the instruction of a new king. At present, instead of employing such masters, far from improving Henri V’s education they were rendering it worse through the parochialism produced by the constraint of family life: on winter evenings, old men, poking through the centuries at a corner of the hearth, teach the boy about days on which the sun no longer shines; they transform the chronicles of Saint-Denis into fairy stories; the two leading barons of the modern age, *Liberty* and *Equality*, would know better how to force Henri Lack-land to grant a Magna Carta.

The Dauphine committed me to making the trip to Bustehrad. Messieurs Dufougerais and Nugent accompanied me in an embassy to Charles X on the very evening of my arrival in Prague. At the head of the deputation were the young men, they were off to complete the negotiations already begun on the issue of being presented. The former, implicated in my trial at the Assize Court, had pleaded his case in a spirited manner; the latter had just undergone an eight-month prison sentence for editing a Royalist paper. The author of *Le Génie du Christianisme* thus had the honor of going to see the Very Christian King, seated in a roomy calash between the editor of *La Mode* and the editor of *Le Revenant*.

## BOOK XLI

### CHAPTER 5

Bustehrad – Charles X's sleep – Henri V – The young men's reception

*Prague, the 30th of September 1833.*

Bustehrad is a large villa belonging to the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, about fifteen miles from Prague, on the road to Carlsbad. The Austrian princes have patrimonial estates in their own country and beyond the Alps are only owners for life: they hold Italy on lease. You reach Bustehrad through a triple alley of apple trees. The villa is not showy; with its outbuildings, it resembles a large tenant farm, and in the midst of a bare plain overlooks a hamlet consisting of young trees and a tower. The interior of the building is an Italian aberration on the 50th parallel: vast rooms without fireplaces or stoves. The apartments are sadly enriched by the spoils of Holyrood. James II's Palace, refurnished by Charles X, provided Bustehrad after the move with its armchairs and carpets.

The King had a fever and was in bed when we arrived at Bustehrad on the 26th at eight in the evening. Monsieur de Blacas showed me into Charles X's room, as I explained to the Duchesse de Berry. A little lamp burnt on the mantelpiece; in the shadowy silence I heard only the noble respiration of the thirty-fifth successor to Hugh Capet. O my aged King! Your sleep was painful; time and adversity, those nightmare burdens, were seated on your chest. A young man approaches the bed of his young wife with less love than the respect I felt in walking with furtive steps towards your solitary couch. At least I was not an evil dream like that which woke you to go to your son's deathbed! I addressed these words to you in my mind which I would have been unable to pronounce aloud without dissolving in tears: *'Heaven guard you from all future ill! Sleep in peace through these nights that verge on your last sleep! Too long your vigils have been those of grief. May this bed of exile lose its harshness awaiting God's visitation! He alone can make this foreign soil lie lightly on your bones.'*

Yes, I would have given all the blood in my body, joyfully, to render the Legitimacy credible to France. I imagined that it might be for the old monarchy as it was for Aaron's dry rod; taken from the Temple in Jerusalem, it grew green and bore almond blossom, a symbol of the renewal of the covenant. I have not tried to stifle my regrets, or hold back the tears with which I sought to wash away the last traces of royal suffering. The feelings I experience, of various kinds, on the subject of these same people, witness to the sincerity with which these *Memoirs* are written. Charles X, the man moved me, while the monarch wounded me: I display those differing impressions as they succeed one another, without seeking to reconcile them.

On the 27th of September, after Charles X had received me in the morning at his bedside, Henri V summoned me: I had not asked to see him. I said a few serious words to him on the subject of his coming of age and the loyal Frenchmen who had offered him golden spurs in their ardor.

For the rest, it is impossible to be treated better than I was. My arrival had sounded the alarm; they feared my account of my trip to Paris. For me then every attention; the others were neglected. My companions, scattered, dying of hunger and thirst, wandered the corridors, stairs, and courtyards of the château, amidst the panicking masters of the house and their preparations for escape. There were oaths and outbursts of laughter.



The Austrian guard marveled at these mustachioed individuals in bourgeois dress; they suspected them of being French soldiers in disguise, who were about to take Bohemia by surprise.

While the storm went on outside, inside Charles X said to me: *'I am occupied with editing the decree regarding my government in Paris. You will have Monsieur de Villèle as a colleague, as you requested, the Marquis de Latour-Maubourg, and the Chancellor.'*

I thanked the King for his kindness, while admiring the delusions of this world. While society collapsed, while monarchies ended, while the face of the earth changed, Charles in *Prague* established a government for *France* on the *advice* of his *ruling* council. Let us not scoff too much: who of us does not have his illusions? Who of us does not nourish nascent hopes? Who of us does not establish their government *in petto* on the *advice* of their *ruling* passions? Mockery would ill befit me, the man of dreams. Are not these *Memoirs* that I scribble in transit my *government* on the *advice* of my *ruling* vanity? Do I not think to speak quite seriously of the future, which is as little under my control as France was under Charles X's command?

Cardinal Latil, not wishing to get into a quarrel, had gone to spend a few days with the Duc de Rohan. Monsieur de Foresta passed by mysteriously, a portfolio under his arm; Madame de Bouillé made me a profound reverence, like a follower, with lowered eyes which wished to gaze upwards beneath their eyelids; Monsieur Lavilatte was waiting to take his leave; there was no sight of Monsieur Barrande, who hoped vainly to return to grace and hung about in some corner of Prague.

I went to pay court to the Dauphin. Our conversation was brief:

*'How is Monseigneur, at Bustehrad?'*

*'– Growing old.'*

*'– As is everyone, Monseigneur.'*

*'– And your wife?'*

*'– Monseigneur, she has the toothache.'*

*'– An abscess?'*

*'– No, Monseigneur: age.'*

*'– You dine with the King? We shall meet again there.'*

And we quit each other.

## BOOK XLI

### CHAPTER 6

The peasant-girl and the ladder – Dinner at Bustehrad – Madame de Narbonne – Henri V – A game of Whist – Charles X – My incredulity regarding the declaration of majority – A reading from the newspaper – Scene with the young men in Prague – I leave for France – Bustehrad by night

*Prague, the 28th and 29th of September 1833.*

I found myself at three with time on my hands: dinner was at six. Not knowing what to do with myself, I walked through alleys of apple trees worthy of Normandy. In a good year the harvest of these false-oranges is worth eighteen thousand francs. The fruit is exported to England. They make no cider from it, the beer monopoly in Bohemia opposing it. According to Tacitus, the Germans had words to express spring, summer and winter; they had no word for autumn, whose name and produce they ignored: *nomen ac bona ignorantur*. Since Tacitus' time, Pomona has arrived among them.

Feeling tired, I perched on the rungs of a ladder leaning against the trunk of an apple-tree. There, I was in direct firing line from the château of Bustehrad, and a sling-shot's throw from the council chamber. Gazing at the roof which was sheltering three generations of the monarchy, I recalled an Arab chant (*maoual*): *'Here we have seen the stars we loved to see, beneath the skies of home, flee beneath the horizon.'*

Filled with these mournful thoughts, I slept. A sweet voice woke me. A Bohemian peasant girl had come to gather apples; puffing out her chest and raising her head, she gave me a Slavic greeting with the smile of a queen: I almost fell from my perch: I said to her in French: *'You are very beautiful; I thank you!'* I saw by her manner she had understood me: apples always count for something in my encounters with *Bohemian* girls. I scrambled down from my ladder like one of those condemned men of feudal times delivered by the presence of a young girl. Thinking of Normandy, Dieppe, Fervaques, and the sea, I took to the paths of this Trianon of Charles X's old-age.

At table were: the Prince and Princess de Bauffremont, the Duke and Duchess de Narbonne, Monsieur de Blacas, Monsieur Damas, Monsieur O'Hegerty, myself, Monsieur le Dauphin, and Henri V: I would have preferred the young men there rather than myself. Charles X did not dine; he was taking care of himself, in order to be fit to leave the next day. The banquet was noisy thanks to the young Prince's chatter: he never left off talking about his horse-riding, his horse, his horse's adventures on grass, his horse's laboring on plough-land. The conversation was perfectly natural and yet I was bothered; I preferred our former discussions about travel and history.

The king arrived and spoke to me. He complimented me once more on my draft note on the majority; it pleased him because, leaving aside the matter of the abdications as a *fait accompli*, it required only Henri's signature, and opened no old wounds. According to Charles X, the declaration would be sent from Vienna to Monsieur Pastoret before my return to France; I bowed with a smile of incredulity, His Majesty, after having tapped me on the shoulder as was his wont said: *'Chateaubriand, where are you off to now?'* – *'To Paris sire, foolishly.'* – *'No, No, not foolishly,'* the King continued, seeking with a kind of anxiety to plumb my thoughts.

The newspapers were brought; the Dauphin seized the English gazettes: suddenly, in the midst of a profound silence, he translated this passage from the *Times* in a loud voice; '*Baron de \*\*\*\* is here, four feet tall, aged sixty-six, and as sprightly as he was fifty years ago.*' And Monseigneur fell silent.

The King withdrew; Monsieur de Blacas said to me: '*You should come to Leoben with us.*' The proposal was not serious. Besides I had no wish to be involved in family affairs; I wished neither to divide relatives, nor become mixed up in risky reconciliations. Whenever I glimpse an opportunity of becoming the favorite of some power or another, I shudder; post-horses hardly seemed swift enough to carry away my potential honors. The shadow of Good-Fortune made me tremble, as Richard's horse did the Saracens.

Next day, the 28th, I shut myself up in the Hôtel des Bains and wrote my dispatch to MADAME. Hyacinthe left with the dispatch that same evening.

On the 29th I went to see Count and Countess Choteck; I found them overcome by the hubbub of Charles X's court. The Grand Burgrave had ended up sending couriers to countermand the instructions halting the young men at the frontier. Moreover, those one saw in the streets of Prague had lost nothing of their French character; a Legitimist and a Republican are, apart from their politics, one and the same: there was noise, tomfoolery, laughter! The visitors came to my hotel to recount their adventures. M\*\*\* had visited Frankfurt with a German guide, who was delighted with the French; M\*\*\* asked him why, and the guide replied: '*Die Vrench are come to Frankfurt; they drink der vine and make love to die pretty vives of die pourgeois. General Auchereau impose forty-vun millions of tax on der city of Frankfurt.*' Those are the reasons why they like the French so much in Frankfurt.

A grand luncheon is served in my inn; the rich pay for the poor. Beside the Moldau they drink Champagne to Henri V's health, who takes to the road with his grandfather for fear of hearing the toasts to his crown. At eight, my business done, I climb into my carriage, hoping never to return to Bohemia.

They say Charles X had the intention of making a religious retreat: there were family precedents for such a plan. Richer, a monk of Senones, and Geoffroy de Beaulieu, Saint Louis' confessor, reported that the great man had thought of shutting himself in a cloister when his son was old enough to replace him on the throne. Christine de Pisan said of Charles V: '*The wise king decided that if he lived until his son the Dauphin was of an age to wear the crown he would hand over the kingdom to him...and become a priest.*' If such princes had abandoned the scepter, they would have been truly missed as advisors to their sons; yet, by remaining kings, did they create successors worthy of themselves? What was Philip the Bold compared with Saint Louis? All Charles V's wisdom turned to folly in his heir.

I passed Bustehrad at ten at night, riding through a silent countryside, vividly lit by the moon. I saw the vague mass of the villa, the hamlet and the ruin that the Dauphin inhabited: the rest of the Royal Family had left. A profound feeling of isolation gripped me; that man (as I have said already) has his virtues: a political moderate, he nourishes few prejudices; he has only a drop of Saint Louis' blood, but that he does have; his probity is unparalleled, his word as inviolable as the word of God. Naturally courageous, his filial piety compromised him at Rambouillet. Brave and humane, in Spain, he had the glory to return a relative to that throne while failing to preserve his own. Louis-Antoine, after the July Days, dreamed of seeking refuge in Andalusia: Ferdinand indeed refused him. The husband of Louis XVI's daughter languished in a Bohemian village; a dog, whose yelp I heard, was the prince's only guard: Cerberus barked thus at the shades in the regions of death, silence and the night.

I have never been able to revisit my paternal hearth during a long life; I have been unable to settle in Rome, where I wished to die; the many hundreds of miles I have travelled, including my first trip to Bohemia, would have taken me to the finest sites of Greece, Italy and Spain. I have devoured those miles and consumed my last days in order to return to this grey and frozen land: how have I offended Heaven?

## BOOK XLI

### CHAPTER 7

A meeting at Schlau – An empty Carlsbad – Hollfeld – Bamberg: the librarian and the young lady – My various Saint Francis' Days – Proofs of religion – France

*From the 29th of September to the 6th of October, 1833*

A carriage was changing horses, at Schlau, at midnight, in front of the post-station. Hearing French spoken, I put my head out of the calash and said: '*Gentlemen, are you going to Prague? You will not find Charles X there, he has left with Henri V.*' I gave my name, '*What, he's left?*' cried several voices together. '*Go on, coachman, go on!*'

My eight compatriots, stopped initially at Eger, had obtained permission to continue their journey, but with a police officer accompanying them. This meeting in 1833 with a band of followers of throne and altar, dispatched by the French Legitimacy, under the escort of a sergeant, was strange! In 1822, in Verona, I had seen cages of Carbonari accompanied by gendarmes. What then do sovereigns want? Whom do they recognize as friends? Do they fear too great a crowd of their supporters? Instead of being moved by their loyalty, they treat the men devoted to their crown as propagandists and revolutionaries.

The postmaster at Schlau had invented a new accordion: he sold me one; all night I worked the wheeze-box, whose sound took from me all memory of the world.

Carlsbad (I passed through on the 30th of September) was deserted; an opera house after the music has ceased. At Eger I found the customs man again, who brought me down from where I was: in the June moonlight with a lady of the Roman Campagna.

At Hollfeld, more swifts but no little basket-carrier; I was sad. Such is my nature: I idealize real people and personify dreams, displacing mind and matter. A little girl and a bird now swell the crowd of beings I create, with which my imagination is populated, like those motes that dance in a ray of sunlight. Forgive me, for talking about myself, I realized too late.

Here is Bamberg. Padua made me recall Livy: at Bamberg, Father Horrion discovered the first part of the Roman historian's thirty-third book. While I ate supper in the country of Joachim Camerarius, and Clavius, the town librarian came to welcome me drawn by my fame, the greatest in the world, according to him which warmed the marrow of my bones. A Bavarian general followed. At the inn-door, a crowd surrounded me as I regained my carriage. A young woman was standing on a milestone, like that Sainte-Beuve who watched the Duc de Guise go by. She smiled: '*Are you mocking me?*' I asked her. – '*No,*' she replied in French, with a German accent, '*it's because I'm so pleased!*'

From the 1st to the 4th of October, I revisited the places I had seen three months previously. On the 4th I reached the border of France. Saint Francis' day is, each year, one on which I examine my conscience. I turn my gaze on the past; I ask myself where I was, and what I was doing on each preceding anniversary. This year, 1833, Saint Francis' Day found me wandering, subject to my vagabond destiny. I saw a cross beside the road; it rose from a clump of trees which allowed a few dead leaves to fall, in silence, over the crucified Son of God. Twenty-seven years earlier, I had passed Saint Francis Day at the foot of the real Golgotha.

My patron saint also visited the Holy Tomb. Francis of Assisi, founder of the mendicant Order, by creating that institution, took a considerable step for the Gospel, which has not been sufficiently remarked upon: he brought the reality of the people into religion; by dressing poverty in a monk's robe, he drove the world towards charity, he raised the beggar in the eyes of the wealthy, and by means of a proletarian Christian militia established a model of the brotherhood of Man that Jesus preached, a brotherhood which will be accomplished by that as yet undeveloped Christian politics without which there will never be complete liberty and justice on this earth.

My patron saint even extended his fraternal tenderness to the animals over which he seemed to have gained that ascendancy, through his innocence, that Man exercised before The Fall: he spoke to them as if they could understand him; he called them his *brothers* and *sisters*. Near Bavano, as he passed by, a multitude of birds gathered around him; he welcomed them and said: *'My winged brothers, love and praise God, for he clothed you in feathers and gave you the power to fly through the sky.'* The birds of Lake Rieti followed him. He was joyful when he met flocks of sheep; he had great compassion for them: *'My sisters,'* he said, *'come to me.'* He sometimes bought, for the price of his clothes, a ewe being led to the slaughter; he recalled that gentlest of lambs, *illius memor agni mitissimi*, crucified for Man's salvation. A cicada lived on a fig-tree branch near his door in the Portiuncula; he called to it; it came to sit on his hand and he said: *'Sister Cicada, sing of God your creator.'* He did the same with a nightingale and was vanquished in song by the bird he blessed, which flew away after its victory. He was forced to take little wild creatures that ran to him and sought shelter at his breast, back to the woods. When he wanted to pray in the morning, he ordered the swallows to be silent, and they obeyed. A young man went to sell turtledoves in Siena; the servant of God begged the lad to hand them over to him, so that no one might kill those birds, symbols in Scripture of innocence and inoffensiveness. The saint carried them to his monastery of Ravacciano; he planted his stick at the door of the monastery; the stick was transformed into a tall green oak tree; the saint let the turtledoves go and commanded them to build their nest there, which they did for many years.

Francis, dying, wished to leave the earth as nakedly as he had entered it; he asked that his bare corpse be interred in the place where criminals were executed, in imitation of Christ who was his example. He dictated a testament of the spirit; for he had nothing to leave his fellow-men but poverty and peace; a saintly woman placed him in the grave.

I have been endowed with poverty by my patron, love of the small and humble, and compassion for animals; but my barren stem will not become a green oak tree to protect them.

I ought to have been happy to have trodden the soil of France on my name day; but have I a homeland? In this country have I ever known a moment's rest? On the 6th of October I re-entered my Infirmmary. The gusty wind of St. Francis' Day still reigned. My trees, burgeoning shelter for the poor people gathered in by my wife, bent beneath my patron saint's wrath. In the evening, through the elm branches on the boulevard, I watched the street-lights flickering, their half-extinguished flames wavering like the little lamp of my life.

**End of Book XLI**

BOOK XLII  
CHAPTER 1  
THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION: – Louis-Philippe

Paris, Rue d'Enfer, 1837  
(*Revised, June 1847*)

If, as I pass from the politics of the Legitimacy to politics in general, I re-read what I published on those politics in the years 1831, 1832, and 1833, my predictions have been accurate enough.

Louis-Philippe is an intelligent man whose tongue is set in motion by a torrent of commonplaces. He pleases a Europe which reproaches us for not recognizing his worth; England loves to see that we, like her, have dethroned a king; the other sovereigns have deserted the Legitimacy which they have not found obedient. Philippe dominates those about him; he toys with his Ministers; he appoints them, dismisses them, re-appoints them, and dismisses them once more, having compromised them, if anything these days can compromise anyone.

Philippe's superiority is real, but it is only relative; place him in an age when society was vibrant, and the mediocrity within would be revealed. Two passions detract from his qualities: his exclusive love for his children, and his insatiable desire to increase his wealth: on those two matters he will always show blindness.

Philippe does not feel for France's honor as the elder branch of the Bourbons do; he has no need of honor: he has no fear of popular uprisings as those nearest to Louis XVI feared them. He is protected by his father's murder; hatred for wealth does not touch him: he is an accomplice not a victim.

Understanding the exhaustion of the age and the baseness of men's souls, Philippe takes comfort from the situation. Legal intimidation has suppressed our freedoms, as I predicted at the time of my farewell speech to the Chamber of Peers, and nothing has lessened it; arbitrary powers have been employed; murder has been done in the Rue Transnonain, protesters bombarded at Lyons, numerous prosecutions begun against the Press; citizens arrested and held in prison for months or years as a preventative measure, to public applause. The country, weary, no longer understanding anything, endures everything. There is scarcely a man one could not set against himself. Month after month, year after year, we have written, spoken and acted in a manner completely contrary to the way we have formerly written, spoken and acted. Through being forced to blush we no longer blush; our self-contradictions escape our notice, they have multiplied so. To end discussion we take the position of affirming that we have never changed, or that we have only changed through progressive modification of our ideas and through our century's clarification of our understanding. The rapidity of events has aged us so swiftly that when we recall our actions of past days, we seem to be speaking of others rather than ourselves; and then, to have changed is only to have done as everyone else has.

Philippe did not believe, as the restored monarchy did, that he was obliged to control every village in order to rule; he judged it sufficient to be master of Paris; now, if he could only put the capital on a war footing with an annual quota of sixty thousand praetorian guards, he would believe himself safe. Europe would allow it because he would persuade the sovereigns that he was acting with a view to stifling revolution in his old cradle, depositing as a guarantee, in the hands of foreigners, France's liberty,

independence and honor. Philippe is a police-sergeant: Europe might spit in his face, he would wipe it, say thank you, and show his royal patent. However, he is the only prince the French are currently capable of tolerating. The debasement of elected leadership is his strength: we find enough in him, momentarily, to satisfy our royalist habits and our democratic tendency; we obey a power that we think we have the right to insult; that is all we need of liberty: a nation on its knees, we snuffle round our master, privilege re-established at his feet, equality in his face. Cynical and cunning, a Louis XI for the age of philosophy, our chosen monarch skillfully sails his boat over a sea of mud. The elder branch of Bourbons has withered save for one bud; the younger branch is rotten. The leader inaugurated at City Hall thinks only of self; he sacrifices the French to what he believes to be his own security. When people discuss what is necessary for our country's greatness, they forget the sovereign's character; he is persuaded that he will perish by the very means which would save France; according to him, what would ensure the survival of the monarchy would destroy the king. Moreover, none have the right to hold him in contempt, since everyone is equally contemptible. But, in the final analysis, whatever prosperity he dreams of, neither he nor his children will prosper, because he abandons the people who brought him everything. Yet on the other hand, legitimate kings, abandoning legitimate kings, will fall: one cannot renounce principles with impunity. If Revolution has for an instant deviated from its course, it will no less add to the torrent that undermines the ancient edifice: no one has played his part, no one will be saved.

Since power among us is inviolable, since the hereditary scepter has fallen to the ground four times in thirty-eight years, since the royal fillet tied by victory has twice been unbound from Napoleon's head, since the July monarchy has been increasingly assailed, one must conclude that it is monarchy and not the Republic which is untenable.

France is under the domination of an ideal inimical to the throne: a crown whose authority is at first recognized, which is then trodden underfoot, then picked up to be trodden underfoot again, is no more than a vain temptation and a symbol of disorder. A master is imposed on men who appear to demand him for memory's sake but will not support him morally; he is imposed on generations who, having forgotten social moderation and decency, know only how to insult the royal personage or replace respect with servility.

Philippe has within him something that hinders destiny; he has nothing within him that can halt it. The democratic party alone advances, because it is marching towards the future. Those who will not concede the general trends which are destroying the basis for monarchy will seek in vain for action from the Chambers to free us from the yoke; the Chambers will not consent to reform because reform would signal their death. The industrialized opposition, for its part, will never willingly bring the king products from its factories, as it did Charles X; it shifts about to create room for itself, it whines, and is difficult; but when it finds itself face to face with Philippe, it retreats, since though it wants to gain control of affairs, it does not want to reverse what it has created and what it lives for. Two fears inhibit it: fear of the Legitimacy's return, fear of populist rule; it sticks to Philippe whom it does not love, but whom it treats as a protector. Satisfied by wealth and work, abdicating its will, the opposition obeys what it knows to be worthless and sleeps in the mud; that is the bed of down invented by an industrial century; it is not as pleasant but it costs less.

Notwithstanding all that, a sovereignty of a few months, or even a few years if you wish, will not alter the irrevocable future. There is hardly anyone now who does not consider the Legitimacy preferable to the



usurpation, in terms of security, liberty, property, and foreign relations, since the principle behind our current monarchy is inimical in principle to European sovereignty. Though it pleased him to accept the investiture of the throne, at the pleasure of, and with the sure methods of democracy, Philippe has forgotten his point of departure: he should have leapt onto his horse and galloped to the Rhine, or rather he should have resisted the impulse that carried him to a crown regardless of conditions: the most durable and fitting institutions emerge from such resistance.

It is said that: '*Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans could not have rejected the crown without plunging us into appalling problems*': the logic of cowards, dupes and rogues. Doubtless conflict would have occurred; but it would have been followed by a swift return to order. What has Philippe done for the country? Would there have been more blood spilt by his refusing the scepter, in Paris, Lyons, Anvers and in the Vendée, than has been shed by his accepting it, without taking into account the rivers of blood that have flowed on account of our elective monarchy in Poland, Italy, Portugal and Spain? Has Philippe given us liberty, in compensation for these ills? Has he brought us glory? He has spent his time begging for legitimization by the powers that be, degrading France by making her a servant of England, and leaving her a hostage; he has tried to make the century come to him, and render him and his race venerable, not wishing to renew himself with the century.

Why did he not marry his eldest son to some lovely plebeian girl of his own country? That would have been to wed France herself; that union of the people and royalty would have made foreign kings repent; since those kings, who have already taken advantage of Philippe's subservience, will not be content with what they have gained: that popular power which is revealed behind our municipal monarchy terrifies them. The monarch of the barricades, in order to be completely acceptable to absolute monarchs, must above all destroy freedom of the Press and abolish our constitutional institutions. In the depths of his soul, he detests them as much as they do, but he has to act in moderation. All this procrastination irritates other monarchs; they cannot be made to tolerate it except by our giving way to them completely abroad: to accustom us to being Philippe's bondsmen at home, we have begun by becoming the vassals of Europe.

I have said a hundred times and I will repeat it once more, the old society is dead. I am not enough of a common man, not enough of a charlatan, not deceived enough in my hopes, to take the least interest in what now exists. France, the most mature of present-day nations, will probably be first among them. It is likely that the elder branch of the Bourbons, whom I will support until death, will even now obtain scant shelter from the old monarchy. The successors of a murdered monarch have never worn his torn robe for long; there is mistrust on both sides: the prince no longer dares trust the nation; the nation cannot believe that a restored family will show forgiveness. A scaffold raised between a people and its king prevents them seeing one another: there are graves which never close. The head of Capet was so high, that the diminutive executioners were obliged to cut it off to take his crown, as the Caribs cut down a palm tree to gather its fruit. The Bourbon stock was propagated in various stems around it; it put out branches which in bowing took root in the earth and rose again as proud offshoots: that family, after having been the pride of other royal races, seems to have become their fate.

But would it be reasonable to believe that Philippe's descendants have a greater chance of reigning than Henri IV's young descendant? It is fine to combine diverse political concepts, but moral truth remains immutable. There is an inevitable reaction, educative, magisterial, and vengeful. The monarch who initiated our freedom was forced to expiate in his own person Louis XIV's despotism and Louis's

corruption; and who is to say that Louis-Philippe, he or his descendants, will not pay a debt for the Regency's depravations? Was that debt not contracted anew by *Egalité* on Louis XVI's scaffold, and has not Philippe his son added to the paternal debt, when, as a disloyal tutor, he dethroned his pupil? *Egalité* bought nothing in the losing of his life; tears at the moment of death purchase nought: they merely wet the breast, but do not fall on conscience's soil. If the Orléans branch were to reign by virtue of the vices and crimes of its ancestors, where then would Providence be? No more terrible temptation would ever have tried men of goodwill. Our illusion is that we can weigh the eternal design in the scale of our short life: we vanish too swiftly for God's punishment always to occur in the brief moment of our existence; punishment descends at the right moment; it no longer strikes the initial offender, but strikes his race which provides it with space to act.

In the universal scheme of things, Louis-Philippe's reign, whatever its duration, will be no more than an anomaly, a momentary offence against the enduring laws of justice: they are violated, those laws, in a narrow and relative way; they are followed in a limitless and general one. From an enormity apparently consented to by Heaven, one must draw the greatest of consequences: one must deduce a Christian proof of the coming abolition of royalty itself. It is that abolition, not some individual punishment, which must expiate Louis XVI's death; no one will be allowed, according to this exercise of justice, to wear the crown, witness Napoleon the Great, and Charles X the Pious. It may have been permitted for the son of a regicide to lie down for a moment, in imitation of kingship, on a martyr's blood-stained bed, in order to render monarchy odious.

Finally, all this reasoning, correct though it may be, will never weaken my loyalty to my young King: if I am all that is left to him in France, I will be forever proud to have been the last subject of one who may be the last king.

BOOK XLII  
CHAPTER 2  
Monsieur Thiers

The July Revolution found a king: has it found a representative? I have described the men of various epochs who have appeared on the scene from 1789 to the present day. Those men belonged more or less to the human race as it was: there was a scale of proportion on which to measure them. We have arrived at generations who are no longer part of the past; studied beneath a microscope, they seem incapable of life, and yet they merge with the elements in which they move; they can breathe air one would have thought un-breathable. The future may invent formulas to calculate the rules of existence of these beings; but the present has no means of assessing them.

Without the power then to explain the altered species, here and there one notices a few individuals on whom one can seize, because specific faults or distinct qualities make them stand out from the crowd. Monsieur Thiers, for example, is the one man the Revolution has produced. He founded the school that admires the Terror, a school to which he belongs. If the perpetrators of the Terror, those deniers and denied of God, were such great men, the authority of their opinions would carry some weight; but those men, tearing each other apart, declared that the party whose throats they were cutting was a band of rogues. Read what Madame Roland says of Condorcet, what Barbaroux, principal actor of the 10th of August, says of Marat, what Camille Desmoulins writes in criticism of Saint-Just. Should Danton be assessed according to Robespierre's view, or Robespierre according to Danton's? When the members of the Convention had such a poor opinion of one another, how, without lacking in the respect one owes, dare one hold an opinion differing from theirs?

I very much fear however that those who been have taken for extraordinary individuals were brutes worth little more than the wheels on a machine. The machines and its cogs have been confused: the machine was powerful, but it was not the wheels that made it. Who invented it then? God: he created it for necessary ends that also derived from Him, at a moment of society which was foreseen.

With its materialistic approach, Jacobinism did not perceive that the Terror had failed, incapable of fulfilling the conditions for its continuation. It could not achieve its end because it could not cause enough heads to roll; it fell four or five hundred thousand or more short: now, time was lacking to execute these lengthy massacres; only unfinished crimes remained whose fruit no one knew how to gather, the last hours of the storm having failed to ripen it.

The secret of the contradictory nature of the men of today lies in a lack of moral sense, in the absence of settled principles and in the cult of force: whoever succumbs is guilty and without merit, at least without that merit that adjusts itself to events. One must be aware of what is hidden behind the liberal phraseology of devotees of the Terror: success deifies. To adore the Convention is merely to adore a tyrant. The Convention once overthrown, you pass with your bundle of freedoms to the Directory, then to Bonaparte, without suspecting your metamorphosis, without considering what you have done. A sworn dramatist, while considering the Girondins as feeble devils because they were *vanquished*, you will make of their deaths no less fantastic a picture: they are fine young men marching to the sacrifice crowned with flowers.

The Girondins, a cowardly faction, which spoke in favor of Louis XVI then voted for his execution, behaved marvelously well, it is true, on the scaffold; but who did not bow their head before death in those

days? Women distinguished themselves by their heroism; the young girls of Verdun mounted the altar like Iphigenias; the workers, about whom they are discretely silent, those plebeians of whom the Convention made so great a harvest, braved the executioner's steel as resolutely as our grenadiers did that of the enemy. For every priest and nobleman, the Convention destroyed thousands of working people in the lowest classes of society; that is what no one chooses to remember.

Does Monsieur Thiers proclaim principles? Not in the least; he advocated massacre, and would preach humanity in just as edifying a manner; he would give himself out to be fanatical about freedom, and yet he oppressed Lyons, fired on the Rue Transnonain, and has stood for and against all the September 1835 laws: if he were ever to read this, he would take it for a eulogy.

As President of the Council, and Foreign Minister, Monsieur Thiers is enraptured by diplomatic intrigues of the school of Talleyrand; he exposes himself to being taken for a serial parasite, lacking in nerve, gravity and discretion. One might disdain seriousness and grandeur of soul, but one should not say so, without having first led a subjugated world to take part in one's orgies at Grand-Vaux.

Yet Monsieur Thiers combines inferior manners with noble instincts; while the surviving feudalists, now impoverished, become stewards on their own lands, Monsieur Thiers, a great Renaissance lord, travelling about like a new Atticus, buys works of art on the road and revives the prodigality of the ancient aristocracy: it is a kind of distinction: but while he sows with as much facility as he reaps, he needs to guard against his old habits of camaraderie: esteem is one of the ingredients of a public persona.

Stirred by his mercurial character, Monsieur Thiers set out to crush anarchy in Madrid as I suppressed it in 1823: a project all the braver in that Monsieur Thiers was in conflict with Louis-Philippe's intentions. He may consider himself a Bonaparte; he may believe his letter-knife to be merely an elongation of a Napoleonic sword; he may persuade himself he is a great general, he may dream of conquering Europe, by reason of having constituted himself narrator, and in a very ill-considered move by having Napoleon's remains brought back here. I accede to all these pretensions; I will merely say that, regarding Spain, at the moment at which Monsieur Thiers thought of invading it, his calculations were in error; he would have ruined his monarch in 1836, while I saved mine in 1823. The essential thing is to do what one desires at the right time: there are two forces: the force of men and the force of events; when the two are in opposition, nothing can be accomplished. At this moment, Mirabeau would sway no one, even though his corruption might not harm him: since no one is disparaged for vice these days; one is only denounced for one's virtues.

Monsieur Thiers has one of three courses to take: name himself the representative of the republican future, cling to the counterfeit July Monarchy like a monkey on a camel's back, or revive the Imperial order. The latter course is to Monsieur Thiers taste; but an empire without an emperor, is that credible? It is more natural to believe that the author of a *History of the Revolution* will allow himself to be consumed by vulgar ambition: he wishes to remain in or re-enter power; in order to keep or re-gain his place, he will utter all the palinodes that the moment or his interests would seem to require; there is a certain audacity in disrobing in public, but is Monsieur Thiers still young enough for his good looks to serve as a veil?

Setting Deutz and Judas aside, I recognize in Monsieur Thiers a supple mind, quick, subtle, flexible, heir to the future perhaps, understanding all, save the greatness that derives from the moral order; free of envy, without pettiness or prejudice, he stands apart from the dull and obscure crowd of mediocrities around

him. His exaggerated pride is yet not odious, because it does not involve contempt for others. Monsieur Thiers has resource, variety, favorable gifts; he is scarcely bothered by differences of opinion, bears no grudges, never fears compromising himself, does another man justice, not through probity or because of what he thinks but because of his worth; which would not prevent him from strangling us of all if the need arose. Monsieur Thiers is not what he might be; age will alter him, to the extent that swollen pride does not inhibit it. If his mind holds firm and he is not carried away by some sudden impulse, events will reveal unknown superiorities in him. He will rise or fall swiftly; there is the possibility that Monsieur Thiers will become a great Minister or remain half-formed.

Monsieur Thiers has already shown lack of resolve when he held the fate of the world in his hands: if he had given the order to attack the English fleet, superior in strength as we then were in the Mediterranean, our success would have been assured; the Turkish and Egyptian fleets, combining in the port of Alexandria, would have augmented ours; victory over England would have electrified France. We would have instantly found 150,000 men to send into Bavaria and hurl at whatever positions in Italy were unprepared or had not foreseen an attack. The whole world might yet have been altered. Would our aggression have been justified? That is another matter; but we might have demanded of Europe whether she had acted in good faith towards us in those treaties through which, abusing the victory they had won, Russia and Germany were immeasurably swollen, while France was reduced to her former curtailed borders. Be that as it may, Monsieur Thiers dared not play his last card; analyzing his life, he has never been sufficiently purposeful, and yet it is because he has committed nothing to the game that he should have been able to gamble everything. We are fallen at the feet of Europe: a similar opportunity to rise again may not present itself for some time.

But would it have been right to set the world ablaze once more? A profound question! Nevertheless, the President of the Council's mistakes being bound up with national feeling, ennoble him.

Ultimately, Monsieur Thiers, to rescue his policy, has reduced France to a space of fifty leagues bristling with fortresses; we will see whether Europe has occasion to smile at this childish behavior on the part of a great mind.

Behold how, led by my pen, I have dedicated more space to a questionable man of the future than I have to people whose remembrance is certain. It is the unfortunate result of having lived too long: I have entered a sterile epoch in which France faces nothing but meagre generations: *Lupa ...carca nella sua magrezza: a she-wolf... full in her leanness*. These *Memoirs* diminish in interest with the passage of history, diminish in what they have borrowed from great events; their tail-end, I fear, will be shaped like those of the daughters of Acheloiüs. The Roman Empire, announced magnificently by Livy, fades and dies obscurely in the works of Cassiodorus. You were happier, Thucydides and Plutarch, Sallust and Tacitus, when telling of the factions that divided Athens and Rome! You were at least certain to enliven them, not merely by your genius, but by the brilliance of Greek and the gravity of Latin! What can we say of our waning society, we Celts, in our jargon confined to its narrow and barbarous bounds? If these final chapters reproduced our courthouse repetitions, those eternal redefinitions of the law, our fighting over portfolios, would they, fifty years from now, be anything more than the unintelligible columns of an old newspaper? Of a thousand and one conjectures, would a single one prove true? Who can foresee the strange leaps and bounds of the mercurial French spirit? Who knows why its execrations and infatuations, its blessings and curses, transform themselves for no apparent reason? Who can divine why it strays from

one political system to another, how, with freedom on its lips and slavery in its heart, it can believe in one version of the truth in the morning and a contrary version by evening? Let us toss a little dust about: like Virgil's bees, we will cease our battles and fly elsewhere.

BOOK XLII  
CHAPTER 3  
Monsieur de Lafayette

If by any chance some measure of greatness still stirs here below, our country will continue to slumber. The loins of a decomposing society are fruitless; even the crimes it engenders are still-born, marred as they are by the sterility of their source. The age we are entering is like a tow-path along which generations, fatally condemned, haul the old world towards a world unknown.

In this year of 1834, Monsieur de Lafayette died. I may already have done him an injustice in speaking of him; I may have represented him as a kind of fool, with twin faces and twin reputations; a hero on the other side of the Atlantic, a clown on this. It has taken more than forty years to recognize qualities in Monsieur de Lafayette which one insisted on denying him. At the rostrum he expressed himself fluently and with the air of a man of breeding. No stain attaches to his life; he was affable, obliging and generous.

Under the Empire he was noble and lived quietly; under the Restoration he did not preserve his dignity so effectively; he abased himself inasmuch as he allowed himself to be known as the *father* of the French Carbonari sections (*ventes*), and the leader of minor conspiracies; he was fortunate to escape justice at Belfort, as a common adventurer. At the commencement of the Revolution, he kept aloof from the murderers; he fought them weapon in hand and wished to save Louis XVI; but though abhorring the massacres, and obliged though he was to flee them, he found it in himself to praise those scenes where heads were carried along on the ends of pikes.

Monsieur de Lafayette is celebrated because he survived: there is a fame that arises spontaneously based on talent, which death enhances by arresting that talent in youth; there is another kind of fame, a tardy offspring of time, which is the product of age; deficient itself in greatness, it is so because of the revolutions in the midst of which it is placed by chance. The bearer of such fame, by dint of existing throughout, becomes involved in everything; his name becomes the insignia or banner of all: Monsieur de Lafayette will be eternally identified with the *National Guard*. The results of his actions were, in an extraordinary manner, often in contradiction to his ideas; a Royalist, in 1789 he overthrew a monarchy eight centuries old; a Republican, in 1830 he created a monarchy of the barricades: he was off to endow Philippe with the crown he had taken from Louis XVI. Molded by events, his image will be found, when the alluvia of our misfortunes settle, embedded in the revolutionary sediment.

His enthusiastic reception in the United States uniquely enhanced his reputation; a nation, rising to salute him, covered him with the glory of its gratitude. Everett ended his speech of 1824 with this apostrophe: *‘Welcome, friend of our fathers, to our shores!...Enjoy a triumph such as never conqueror nor monarch enjoyed...Above all, the first of heroes and of men, the friend of your youth, the more than friend of his country, rests in the bosom of the soil he redeemed. On the banks of his Potomac he lies in glory and in peace. You will re-visit the hospitable shades of Mount Vernon, but him, whom you venerated as we did, you will not meet at its door...But the grateful children of America will bid you welcome in his name. Welcome, thrice welcome, to our shores, and whithersoever throughout the limits of the continent your course shall take you, the ear that hears you shall bless you...’*

In the New World, Monsieur de Lafayette contributed to the creation of a new society; in the old world, to the destruction of an old one: freedom invokes him in Washington, anarchy in Paris.

Monsieur de Lafayette had only one idea, and happily for him it was that of the century; the fixity of that idea created his empire; it served to blinker him, it prevented him looking to right or left; he marched with a firm step on a single track; he advanced, without tumbling over precipices, not because he saw them, but because he did not; blindness took the place of genius in him: everything fixed is fatal, and whatever is fatal is powerful.

I can still see Monsieur de Lafayette, at the head of the National Guard, passing, in 1790, along the boulevards to reach the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. On the 22nd of May 1834, I saw him again, lying in his coffin, following the same boulevards. Among the cortege could be seen a band of Americans, each person with a yellow flower in their buttonhole. Monsieur de Lafayette had a quantity of earth transported to the United States sufficient to cover him in his grave, but his plan was not fulfilled.

*'And you shall ask instead of holy oil  
A few urns of earth in American soil,  
And then return that pillow sublime,  
So that after death, his dear remains  
Might, in his homeland, own six feet at least  
Of free earth in which to sleep.'*

In his final moments, forgetting both his political dreams and the romance of his life, he wished to rest at Picpus next to his virtuous wife: death sets everything in order.

At Picpus are interred victims of that Revolution begun by Monsieur de Lafayette; there stands a chapel where they say perpetual prayers in memory of the victims. To Picpus I accompanied Monsieur le Duc de Montmorency, a colleague of Monsieur de Lafayette in the Constituent Assembly; in the depths of the grave the rope twisted that Christian's bier askew, as if he had turned on his side to pray once more.

I was in the crowd, at the entrance to the Rue Grange-Batelière, when Monsieur de Lafayette's procession filed past: at the top of the boulevard the hearse halted; I saw it, gilded by a fugitive ray of sunlight, gleaming above the weapons and helmets: then the shadows returned and he vanished.

The multitude flowed by; women selling pastries (*plaisirs*) cried their wares, vendors of toys, here and there, hawked paper windmills that turned in the same breeze whose sighs had stirred the plumes of the funeral car.

At the session of the Chamber of Deputies on the 20th of May 1834, the President spoke: *'The name of General Lafayette,'* he said, *'will remain celebrated in history...In expressing to you the condolences of the Chamber, I add, dear colleague (Georges Lafayette), my personal assurances of affection.'* After these words, the note-taker to the session placed in parentheses the word: (Hilarity).

That is what one of the weightiest of lives is reduced to: *hilarity*! What remains of the deaths of the greatest men? A grey cloak and a cross of straw, like those over the body of the Duc de Guise, assassinated at Blois.

In earshot of the public news-vendor who, by the railings of the Tuileries Palace, sold the tidings of Napoleon's death for a *sou*, I heard two charlatans singing the praises of their Venice treacle (*orviétan*);



and in the *Moniteur* of the 21st of January 1793, I read these words beneath an account of Louis XVI's execution:

*'Two hours after the execution, nothing proclaimed that he who was once leader of the nation had just suffered the punishment reserved for criminals.'* Following those words this announcement appeared: *'Ambroise, a comic opera.'*

The last actor in a drama played for fifty years, Monsieur de Lafayette was left behind on stage; the final chorus of the Greek tragedy proclaims the moral of the piece: *'Learn, blind mortals, to turn your gaze on the last hour of life.'* And I, a spectator seated in an empty theatre, its boxes deserted, its lights extinguished, I alone, of all my age, remain before the lowered curtain, in silence and the night.

BOOK XLII  
CHAPTER 4  
Armand Carrel

Armand Carrel threatened Philippe's future, as General Lafayette haunted his past. You know how I came to know Monsieur Carrel; since 1832 I never ceased to communicate with him until the day I followed him to the Saint-Mandé cemetery.

Armand Carrel was anxious; he began to fear that the French were incapable of any rational feeling for freedom; he had some presentiment of the brevity of his life: as something on which he could not count and to which he attached scant worth, he was always ready to risk that life on a throw of the dice. If he had died in his duel with young Laborie, over Henri V, his death would have been in a great cause at least, and in itself a noble drama; his funeral would probably have been honored by violent demonstrations; yet he has left us because of a wretched quarrel not worth a hair of his head.

He was in one of his innate fits of melancholy when he inserted an article in the National to which I replied in this note:

*‘Paris, 5th of May 1834.*

*Monsieur, your article is full of that sensitive feeling for situations and conventions which elevates you above all the other political writers of our day. I do not speak of your rare talent; you know that, even before I had the honor of meeting you, I rendered it full justice. I will not thank you for your praise; I like to think it is due to what I regard now as an old friendship. Sir, you are rising higher; you are becoming more isolated as all men do who are made for great things; gradually the crowd, which cannot follow, deserts them, and they are seen all the more clearly for standing apart.*

CHATEAUBRIAND’

I sought to console him in another letter of the 31st of August 1834, after he had been condemned for a Press offence. I received this reply; it displays the man's opinions, regrets and hopes.

TO MONSIEUR LE VICOMTE DE CHATEAUBRIAND

*‘Sir,*

*Your letter of the 31st of August was only passed to me on my arrival in Paris. I would have thanked you earlier, if I had not been forced to spend the little time allowed me by the police, who were informed of my return, in preparations for my entering prison. Yes, Monsieur, here I am, condemned to six months in prison by the magistrates, for an imaginary offence and in virtue of an equally illusory law, because the jury intentionally dismissed the charge against me, on the most substantial accusation, after a defence which, far from attenuating my guilt in speaking the truth to Louis-Philippe, aggravated that crime by establishing it as the right of the entire opposition Press. I am pleased that the difficulties of so bold a thesis, in times like these, seemed to have been virtually overcome by that defence, which you have read, and in which it benefited me to invoke the authority of that book with which, eighteen years ago, you educated your own party as to the principles of constitutional responsibility.*

*I often ask myself sadly what end writings such as yours have served, Monsieur, and those of the most eminent leaders of public opinion to whom I myself belong, when that concurrence of the noblest intellects in the land, in constant defence of the laws of free speech, has not resulted for the mass of thinkers in France in a party determined from now on under all regimes, to demand from whatever politics may be victorious, freedom of thought, speech and writing, as the prime responsibility of whichever legitimate authority is in power. Is it not true, Monsieur, that when you demanded, under the previous government, total freedom of debate, it was not for the sake of the temporary benefit that your political friends might accrue, in their opposition to adversaries who had become masters of the power of intrigue? Some used the Press thus, as has indeed been shown since; but you, Sir, you demanded freedom of debate for the whole of society, a forum, and general protection, for all ideas past or current; it is that which has earned you, Sir, the recognition and respect of those thinkers whom the July Revolution brought fresh to the lists. That is why our work is linked to yours, and why we quote your writings, less as admirers of the incomparable talent that produced them than as aspirants from afar to the continuation of the same task, young soldiers as we are of a cause in which you are the most glorious of veterans.*

*What you have desired for thirty years, Monsieur, and what I would wish, if I am allowed to name myself alongside you, is to guarantee, to the interests that share in our noble France, more humane rules of engagement, laws more civilized, more fraternal, more decisive than civil war, and only debate can prevent civil war. When shall we succeed in replacing faction by ideas, and intrigue, egotism and greed by legitimate and worthy interests? When shall we see persuasion, and the word, control those inevitable transactions that the dueling of parties and the shedding of blood wearily bring about, but too late for the dead of both camps, and too often without benefit to the wounded survivors? As you have said, sadly, Monsieur, it seems that much that was learnt has been forgotten and that in France no one knows, any longer, what it costs to shelter beneath a tyranny promising silence and peace. Nevertheless we must continue to speak, write and publish; unforeseen benefits sometimes emerge from constancy. And, Sir, of all the fine examples you have given us that which is most constantly before my eyes is comprised in the single word: Persevere.*

*Accept, Sir, the feelings of undying affection with which I am happy to sign myself,*

*Your most devoted servant, A. CARREL*

*Puteaux, near Neuilly, the 4th of October 1834'*

Monsieur Carrel was imprisoned at Sainte-Pélagie; I went to see him there two or three times a week: I found him standing at the bars of his window. He reminded me of his neighbor, a young African lion in the Jardin des Plantes: motionless behind the bars of his cage, that scion of the desert allowed his vague and melancholy gaze to wander over the objects outside; it was obvious he would not live. Then we went downstairs, Monsieur Carrel, and I; the servant of Henri V walked with the enemy of kings in a damp courtyard, sombre, narrow, and surrounded by high walls like a well. There were other Republicans walking up and down the courtyard too: young and ardent revolutionaries, with moustaches, beards, long hair, German or Greek caps, and pallid faces, looking about, with a threatening aspect, and the cast of ancient souls in Tartarus before their emergence to the light: they were ready to burst back into life. Their clothes acted on them as a uniform does on a soldier, like Nessus' blood-stained shirt on Hercules: they represented a vengeful world hidden behind current society and prepared to make it tremble.

In the evenings they gathered in their leader, Armand Carrel's, room; they talked about what they would do when they came to power, and the necessity of shedding blood. Debates took place about the *mighty citizens of the Terror*: some, partisans of Marat, were atheists and materialists; others, admirers of Robespierre, adored that new Christ. Did not Saint Robespierre say, in his speech on the Supreme Being, that *belief in God gave the strength to brave misfortune*, and that *innocence on the scaffold would make the tyrant in his triumphal chariot grow pale*? The equivocation of an executioner speaking tenderly of God, misfortune, tyranny, the scaffold in order to persuade men that he was only slaying the guilty, and indeed as an act of virtue; an anticipation of those miscreants, who, sensing the approach of punishment, stand like Socrates before the judge, seeking to ward off the blade by threatening him with their innocence!

His stay in Sainte-Pélagie did Monsieur Carrel harm: imprisoned with those ardent spirits, he contested their ideas, berated them, and defied them, nobly refusing to celebrate the 21st of January; but at the same time he was made irritable by suffering and his powers of reason were weakened by the murderous sophisms that rang in his ears.

Mothers, sisters, young men's wives came to care for him each morning and carry out the domestic tasks. One day, passing through the dark corridor that led to Monsieur Carrel's room, I heard a delightful voice coming from a neighboring cell: a lovely woman hatless, hair unbound, sitting on the edge of a pallet bed, mending the tattered garments of a kneeling prisoner, who seemed less a captive of Philippe than of the woman at whose feet he was enchained.

Freed from captivity, Monsieur Carrel came in turn to visit me. A few days before his end, he came to bring me an issue of the *National* in which he had taken pains to include an article on my *Essais sur la littérature anglaise*, where he quoted with excessive praise the pages that terminate the *Essais*. Since his death, I have been sent this article in his own hand, which I will keep as a pledge of his friendship. *Since his death!* What words I have just traced without thinking!

Despite being an essential supplement to the law which does not recognize crimes of honor, dueling is dreadful, especially when it destroys a life full of promise and deprives society of one of those rare individuals who only appears after a century of effort, in the wake of certain ideas and events. Carrel fell in the woods that saw the Duc d'Enghien fall: the shade of the great Condé's descendant served as the famous commoner's witness and bore him away. Those fatal woods have twice made me weep: at least I cannot reproach myself for any lack of essential sympathy or grief engendered by those two catastrophes.

Monsieur Carrel, who, in other encounters, never thought of death, thought of it before this: he spent the night writing his last testament, as if he had been forewarned of the result of the duel. At eight in the morning, on the 22nd of July 1836, he went, swift and keen, to those leafy shadows at the very hour when the deer are at play.

Placed at the measured distance, he walked rapidly forward, and fired without flinching, as was his custom; he seemed never to have enough of danger. Wounded to death and supported in his friends' arms, as he passed before his adversary who was himself wounded, he said: '*Are you much hurt, Sir?*' Armand Carrel was as thoughtful as he was intrepid.

On the 22nd, it was late when I heard of the incident; on the morning of the 23rd, I went to Saint-Mandé; Monsieur Carrel's friends were extremely anxious. I wanted to enter, but the surgeon advised me that my presence might excite the dying man too much and extinguish the feeble ray of hope that still remained. I withdrew in consternation. On the following day, the 24th, Hyacinthe whom I had sent on ahead, came to tell me that the unfortunate young man had died at five-thirty, after having experienced severe pain: life despite all its efforts had lost its desperate struggle with death.

The funeral took place on Tuesday the 26th. Monsieur Carrel's father and brother had arrived from Rouen. I found them shut in a little room with three or four of the closest friends of the man whose loss we deplored. They embraced me, and Monsieur Carrel's father said: *'Armand should have remained a Christian like his father, mother, brothers and sisters: the needle has but a few hours to move before reaching the final point on the dial.'* I will regret forever not having seen Carrel on his death-bed: I would not have despaired, at the supreme moment, of helping the *needle* travel that space beyond which it might have reached Christ's hour.

Carrel was not as anti-religious as has been suggested: he had doubts; when from firm disbelief one passes to indecision, one is quite near to certainty. A few days before his death, he said: *'I would give all this life to believe in the other.'* In giving an account of Monsieur Sautelet's suicide he wrote these forceful paragraphs:

*'I have been able in thought to extend my life to that instant, rapid as lightening, when the sight of objects, motion, sound, and feeling shall escape me, and in which the last efforts of my spirit shall gather to form the idea: I am dying; but for the minute, the second that follows immediately upon that, I have always felt an indefinable horror; my imagination always refuses to distinguish anything further. To plumb the depths of hell seems a thousand times less fearful than that universal uncertainty:*

*"To die, to sleep,  
To sleep! Perchance to dream!"*

*'I have seen how all men, whatever their strength of character or belief, own to that same impossibility of going beyond their last earthly impression, and the mind is lost there, as if in arriving at that boundary you find yourself suspended above a ten thousand foot precipice. You dispel that fearful sight in order to go out and fight a duel, attempt an attack on a redoubt, or confront a stormy sea; you even appear to scorn life; you adopt a confident expression, calm and contented; but it is because your imagination holds out to you victory rather than death; it is because the mind dwells less on danger than on the means of escaping it.'*

These words on the lips of a man destined to die in a duel are noteworthy.

In 1800, when I returned to France, I was ignorant of the birth of one of my friends in that land where I disembarked. In 1836, I saw that friend descend into the grave without those consolations of religion whose memory I brought to my country in the first year of the century.

I followed the coffin from the mortuary to the burial place; I walked next to Monsieur Carrel's father and gave my arm to Monsieur Arago: Arago has measured the heavens I have sung.

Arriving at the gate of the little rural cemetery, the convoy halted; speeches were pronounced. The absence of the cross told me that the sign of my grief must remain buried in the depths of my soul.

Six years previously in the July Days, passing before the colonnade of the Louvre, near an open ditch, I met those young men who carried me off to the Luxembourg where I was to protest in support of a monarchy which they had just toppled; six years later, I returned, on the anniversary of the July celebrations, to associate myself with the sorrow of those young Republicans, as they had associated with my loyalty. Strange destiny! Armand Carrel sighed out his last breath at the house of an officer of the Royal Guard, who had not sworn the oath to Philippe; a royalist and a Christian, I had the honor of bearing a corner of the shroud which covers those noble remains but cannot hide them.

Many kings, princes, ministers, men who thought themselves powerful, have passed before me: I did not deign to raise my hat to their coffin or dedicate a word to their memory. I have found more to study and describe in the intermediate ranks of society than in those whose livery is displayed; a piece of silk embroidered with gold is not worth the fragment of flannel that the ball drove into Carrel's chest.

Carrel, who remembers you? Only the mediocrities and cowards do, whom your death has freed from their fear of your superiority, and I who did not share your views. Who thinks of you? Who recollects you? I congratulate you on having completed that journey, with a single step, whose trajectory when prolonged becomes so sickening and empty, on having brought the goal of your travels within range of a pistol-shot, a distance which still seemed too great to you, and which you shortened by advancing to a mere sword's length.

I envy those who have departed before me: like Caesar's soldiers at Brundisium, I gaze at the open sea from the cliff-heights and look towards Epirus to see if I can glimpse the vessels that transported the earlier legions returning to carry me off in my turn.

A few days after the funeral, I went to Monsieur Carrel's house: the apartment was shut: when the shutters were opened, the daylight which could no longer reach the absent owner's eyes, flooded the deserted rooms. My heart was heavy contemplating his books, his table, which I have bought, his pen, the insignificant words scribbled at random on a few scraps of paper; everywhere traces of life, and death everywhere.

A person dear to Monsieur Carrel uttered not a word; she was sitting on a sofa, I sat down next to her. A little dog came to gaze at us. Then the young woman burst into tears. Pushing back the hair from her brow and seeking to gather her thoughts, she said: '*You wish to see Monsieur Carrel?*'

She rose, took up a picture covered by a cloth, removed the cloth and revealed a portrait of the unfortunate man drawn by Monsieur Scheffer a few hours after death. '*When I saw him dead,*' the young woman said: '*he was disfigured by his final agony; his face softened afterwards, and Monsieur Scheffer told me his smile looked like that.*' The portrait, a striking resemblance indeed, revealed something of the martyr, sombre and energized, but the mouth smiled sweetly as if the dead man smiled at being freed from this life.

She who would have married Carrel someday, covered up the portrait once more and added: '*It would be well if you could give me a letter that I could show my relatives; they would be happy if you esteem me: I could use it in my defence.*'

In order to try and distract her, I spoke about the papers Monsieur Carrel had left behind. *‘There they are,’* she said, *‘he had a great affection for you, Monsieur, and he valued very few people and kept only a handful of letters, there are not many here, some letters from yourself, and then a letter from his mother which he kept because of its harshness.’*

I left that unfortunate house: from then on vainly I have thought myself incapable of sharing young women’s sorrows, since the years besiege and chill me; I force a way through them with difficulty, as the cabin-dweller in winter is obliged to open a path through the fallen snow at his door to seek out a ray of sunlight.

Having re-read this in 1839, I will add that having visited Monsieur Carrel’s tomb in 1837, I found it quite neglected, but I saw a black wooden cross that his sister Nathalie had planted near the grave. I paid Vaudran, the gravedigger, the eighteen francs still owing for the metal railings; I asked him to take care of the site, lay some turf and grow some flowers there. I go to Saint-Mandé as the seasons alter, to pay the fee and reassure myself that my intentions have been faithfully executed.

## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 5

#### VARIOUS WOMEN: A Lady from Louisiana

Preparing to complete my collection of portraits, and casting a glance around me, I glimpse various women I have involuntarily neglected; angels grouped at the foot of my painting, they lean on the frame to view the end of my life.

In the past I have met women variously known and celebrated. Women today are altered in manner: for the better or for the worse? It is simply that I incline towards the past; but the past is clothed with a mist in which objects take on a complexion pleasant but often deceptive. My youth, to which I cannot return, has left with me impressions of my grandmother; I barely remember her and should be delighted to see her again.

A lady from Louisiana arrived from the *Mississippi* to see me: I thought I was meeting the virgin of last love. Célestine wrote me several letters; they might have been dated *the Moon of flowers*; she showed me fragments of her *memoirs* composed in the savannahs of Alabama. Sometime later, Célestine wrote saying that she was dressing for her presentation at Philippe's court: I had donned my bearskin. Célestine had been changed into an alligator from the Florida swamps: may Heaven bring her peace and love, as long they endure!



BOOK XLII  
CHAPTER 6  
Madame Tastu

There are people who, interposed between you and the past, prevent your memories surfacing; there are others who immediately remind you of what you once were. Madame Tastu produced this latter impression. Her mode of speech is natural; she has abandoned Gallic patois to those who seek to appear younger by hiding in our ancestor's costume. Favorinus told a Roman who affected the Latin of the *Twelve Tables*: 'Are you trying to communicate with Evander's mother?'

Since I have touched on antiquity, I will say a few words of the women of those days while descending the scale towards our own day. Greek women were sometimes celebrated philosophers; more frequently they followed another divinity: Sappho remains the immortal sibyl of Gnidos; no more is known of Corinne after her conquest of Pindar; Aspasia taught Socrates about Venus:

*'Socrates, accept my teaching. Fill yourself with poetic inspiration: with its powerful charms you will learn to bind what you love; you shall enchain with the music of the lyre, bearing to the heart through the ear the living form of passion.'*

The *Muse*'s sigh, passing over the women of Rome without leading them to create, animated Clovis' nation, as yet in its cradle. The *langue d'Oïl* had its Marie de France; the *langue d'Oc* its Dame de Die, who, in her castle of Vaucluse, sang of her cruel lover.

*'I would know, my fine and handsome lover, why you treat me so cruelly, and so savagely: per que m'etz vos tan fers, ni tan salvatage.'*

The Middle Ages transmitted such songs to the Renaissance. Louise Labé wrote:

*'Oh! Would I were snatched away into the lovely breast  
Of him for whom I go languishing!'*

Clémence de Bourges, nicknamed the *Eastern Pearl*, who was buried with her face uncovered and her head crowned with flowers because of her beauty, the two Marguerites and Mary Stuart, all three of them queens, expressed simple frailties in simple language.

I had an aunt about the time of our Parnassian era, Madame Claude de Chateaubriand; but I am more embarrassed by Madame Claude than by Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul. Madame Claude, disguised under the name of *The Lover*, addresses seventy sonnets to a mistress. Reader, pardon my aunt Claude's twenty-two years: *parcendum teneris: be indulgent to youth*. If my aunt Boisteilleul was more discrete, well, she was seventy-seven when she sang, and the traitor Trémigon appeared to her aged thoughts as a warbler as much he did a Sparrow-hawk. Be that as it may, here are a few lines of Madame Claude's, which truly set her among the ancient poetesses:

SONNET LXVI

*'Oh, in love how strangely am I treated,  
Since I dare not show my love's truth plain,  
Nor of my hardships dare to you complain,  
Nor demand of you what I wish so deeply!*

*The eye then must serve me as a tongue,  
Thus to ensure that I proclaim my song.  
Hear, if you can, what I say with the eye.*

*Sweet invention, could you but find a way  
To hear with the eyes what the eyes do say  
The word that I am not bold enough to cry!*

As the language became fixed, freedom of feeling and thought became restricted. There is barely a memory of that Madame Deshoulières, of Louis XIV's day, over-praised and over-neglected. The elegy was maintained as a form through female sorrow, during Louis XV's reign and into that of Louis XVI, when the grand elegies of the people commenced: the old school ended with Madame de Bourdic, now little known, yet who left us a noteworthy *Ode to Silence*.

The new school has cast its thought in another mold: Madame Tastu walks amidst the choir of modern women poets, in prose or verse, Allart, Waldor, Desbordes-Valmore, Ségalas, Revoil, Mercoeur etc.: *Castalidum turba: the Castalian throng*. Must it not be regretted that they have failed, as regards the example given by the Aonides, to celebrate that passion which, according to antiquity, brightened Cocytus' brow, and made him smile at Orpheus' sighs? At Madame Tastu's gatherings, love only speaks in hymns borrowed from foreign tongues. That reminds me of what is recounted of Madame Malibran: when she wanted to know the name of a bird she had forgotten she imitated its song. From the verse of several Maeonides, there breathe the regrets of women who, feeling time steal upon them, wish to hang their harp up as an offering: one would wish to rid them of the former and keep the latter in their hands! An indefinable complaint issues from our lives: the years are a long sad lament with one refrain.

BOOK XLII  
CHAPTER 7  
Madame Sand

I thanked Madame Dudevant, otherwise known as George Sand, for having mentioned René in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*; she did not reply. Some time later she sent me *Lélia*, and I did not reply! Soon a brief exchange, in the form of an explanation, took place between us.

*‘I dare to hope that you will forgive me for not having replied to the flattering letter you were so good as to write me when I mentioned René, on the re-publication of Oberman. I know not how to thank you for all the kind expressions you have employed in regard to my work.*

*I have sent you *Lélia*, and sincerely hope that she will gain from you the same protection. The greatest privilege of an accepted and universal fame such as yours is to gather together, and encourage the debut of, inexperienced writers for whom there is no lasting success without your patronage.*

*Accept the assurance of my deepest admiration, and believe me, Monsieur, one of your most loyal followers.*

GEORGE SAND’

At the end of October 1834, Madame Sand made me the present of a copy of her new novel, *Jacques*: I accepted the gift.

‘30th October 1834

*Madame, I hasten to offer you my sincerest thanks. I will read *Jacques in the Forest of Fontainebleau* or by the seashore. When I was younger, I would have been less brave; but my age will defend me from solitude, without detracting from the passionate admiration I profess for your talent and which I conceal from none. You have, Madame, given new prestige to that city of dreams from which I once left for Greece with a world of illusions: returning to his point of departure, René lately, on the Lido, paraded his regrets and his memories, between Childe-Harold who had vanished, and *Lélia* who was about to appear.*

CHATEAUBRIAND’

Madame Sand possesses a talent of the first order; her descriptions have the verisimilitude of Rousseau in his reveries, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in his *Études*. Her clear style is not flawed by any of the faults of the day. *Lélia*, painful to read, and lacking the delightful scenes of *Indiana* and *Valentine*, is nevertheless a masterpiece of its kind: extreme in nature, it is without passion, and yet disturbs one like a passion; soul is absent from it, and yet it weighs on the heart; depravity of maxim, abuse of moral rectitude, could go no further; but over this abyss the author casts her talent. In the vale of Gomorrah, dew falls by night over the Dead Sea.

Madame Sand’s works, her novels, the poetry of matter, are born of the age. Despite her superiority it is to be feared lest the author has, by the very nature of her writings, limited her circle of readers. George Sand will not suit all ages. Of two men, equal in genius, of whom one preaches order and the other

disorder, the former will attract the greater audience: the human race denies universal applause to whatever harms morality, the pillow on which weakness and justice can rest; the books which cause our first blushes, and whose text has not been learnt by heart on emerging from the cradle, will hardly be associated with all our life's memories; books only read in hiding, which have not been our sworn and cherished friends, which are part neither of the candor of our feelings, nor the integrity of our innocence. Providence has enclosed that success which does not have its source in the good, in narrow limits; and given universal glory to whatever encourages virtue.

I reason here, I know, as a man whose narrow-minded view fails to embrace the vast horizon of *Humanity*, as a man of the past, attached to a risible morality: an obsolete morality of long ago, at very best suitable only for unenlightened spirits, in society's infancy. A new Gospel is constantly being born far beyond the commonplaces of that conventional wisdom which arrests the progress of the human species, and prevents the restoration of that impoverished body, so calumniated by the soul. When women run about the streets; when it suffices, for a marriage, to open a window and call God to the wedding as witness, priest and guest: then all modesty is destroyed; espousals will be everywhere and people will rise, like doves, to the heights of nature. My criticism of the genre in which Madame Sand writes has no value then, other than as part of the vulgar order of things past; thus I trust she will not be offended by it: the admiration I profess for her must excuse remarks which owe their origin to the misfortune of my age. In the past I would have been swept away more by the *Muses*; those daughters of heaven were once my sweet mistresses; today they are no more than old friends: they keep me company of an evening at the fireside, but leave me swiftly; because I go to bed early, and they go to watch over Madame Sand's hearth.

Doubtless in this way she will display her intellectual omnipotence, and yet she will please less because she will be less original; she will think to augment her power by entering the depths of reveries beneath which we lie buried, we, the vulgar and deplorable: but she will be wrong: since she is far above that extravagance, that vagueness, that presumptuous nonsense. At the same time as a rare, but over-flexible, skill should be alerted to superior folly, it should also be warned that the penning of fantasies, intimate portraiture (as the jargon has it), is limited, that its source is in youth, that every instant its flow reduces, and that after a certain number of works, one ends in feeble repetition.

Is it so certain that Madame Sand will always take the same delight in what she now creates? Will not the merit and understanding of the passions of twenty be lowered in her estimation, as the works of my own youth have depreciated in mine? Only the works of the ancient Muse never alter, sustained as they are by a nobility of manners, beauty of language, and majesty of feeling belonging to the whole human race. The fourth book of the *Aeneid* will remain forever open to human admiration, because it is suspended in the heavens. The fleet which brings the founder of the Roman Empire; *Dido* the founder of Carthage stabbing herself after having predicted *Hannibal*'s birth:

*'Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor;  
From my bones may some avenger rise.'*

Love making the rivalry between Rome and Carthage spurt from his torch, then setting fire with his flame to the funeral pyre whose blaze the fleeing Aeneas saw reflected on the waves, is all quite different from a dreamer walking through a wood, or a libertine vanishing by drowning himself in a lake. Madame Sand will, I hope, wed her talent one day to subjects as durable as her genius.

Madame Sand will only be converted by the preaching of that missionary with the bald head and white beard, called Time. A less austere voice currently holds the poet's ear captive. Now, I am persuaded that Madame Sand's talent is partially rooted in corruption; she would be commonplace if she were modest. It would be otherwise if she had permanently resided in that sanctuary unfrequented by men; her power of love, restrained and hidden beneath a virginal fillet, would have drawn from her breast those seemly melodies which belong to woman and the angels. However that may be, audacity in doctrine and voluptuousness in morals represent ground not yet tilled by a daughter of Adam, who, given over to feminine culture, has produced a harvest of unknown flowers. Let us suffer Madame Sand to give birth to such perilous marvels till winter approaches; she will sing no more *when the North Wind blows*; while waiting let us hope that, less lacking in foresight than the Cicada, she will make provision of her glory for the day when a dearth of pleasure strikes. Musarium's mother told him: '*You will not be eighteen forever.*' Will Chaereas always remember his vows, tears, and kisses?

Furthermore, many women have been seduced as if transported by their youth; nearer autumn, retreating to the maternal hearth, they have added a sombre or plaintive string to their cithara with which to express religion or misfortune. Old age is a traveller by night; the earth is hidden from it, it only sees the heavens glittering above its head.

I have not met with Madame Sand dressed as a man, or wearing the blouse and carrying the iron-shod staff of a mountaineer: I have not seen her drink of the Bacchantes' cup, or smoke indolently while seated on a sofa like a Sultana: natural or affected idiosyncrasies which for me add nothing to her charm or genius.

Is she any more inspired, when she makes a cloud of vapor rise from her lips to wreath her hair? Did *Lélia* escape from her mother's brain as a puff of smoke, as Sin emerged in a wreath of flame from the head of the guilty Archangel, according to Milton? I do not know who passes to the sacred courts; but down here, Nemea, Phila, Lais, the spiritual Gnathene, Phryne, who made Apelles despair of his brush, Praxiteles of his chisel, Leaena who was loved by Harmodius, the two sisters surnamed Aphyes, because they were small and large-eyed, Doricha, whose hair-ribbon and scented robe were consecrated in Venus' temple, all those enchantresses, in the end, knew only Arabia's perfumes. Madame Sand, on her side, has, it is true, the authority of the Odaliques and young Mexican girls who dance with cigars between their lips.

What effect has the sight of Madame Sand had on me, following that of the few gifted women, and many delightful women whom I have known, following that of those daughters of the earth, who like Madame Sand said with Sappho: '*Come, Mother of Love, to our delicious banquets, fill our cups with the nectar of roses?*' In my addressing now fiction now reality, the author of *Valentine* has made on me two very different impressions.

Regarding fiction I shall not speak, since I ought no longer to understand its language; regarding reality, as a man of mature age, cherishing notions of propriety, attaching as a Christian the highest value to the virtue of modesty in women, I have no idea how to express my unhappiness at such qualities bestowed on those prodigal and faithless hours that are consumed only to vanish.

BOOK XLII  
CHAPTER 8  
Monsieur de Talleyrand

*Paris, 1838*

In the spring of this year, 1838, I was occupied with *The Congress of Verona*, which I was obliged to publish according to the terms of my literary contract: I have spoken of it in the appropriate place in these *Memoirs*. A man has died; that guardsman of the aristocracy follows the powerful plebeians who have already vanished.

When Monsieur de Talleyrand first appeared on the stage of my political career, I spoke a few words to him. Now his whole existence is revealed to me by his last hour, in accord with that fine saying of the ancients.

I had dealings with Monsieur de Talleyrand; as a man of honor I was loyal to him, as you have seen, especially regarding the falling-out at Mons, when I sacrificed myself freely for him. Quite simply, I shared in disagreeable things that happened to him, and I pitied him when Maubreuil slapped his face. There was a time when he pursued me in a charming manner; he wrote to me at Ghent saying, as you have read, that I was *a strong man*; when I was lodging at the house on the Rue des Capucines, he sent me, with perfect gallantry, a Foreign Office seal, a talisman engraved no doubt under the sign of his constellation. Perhaps it was because I did not abuse his generosity that he became my enemy without any provocation on my part, when I achieved a little success which was not his work. His remarks travelled the world and failed to offend me since Monsieur de Talleyrand could not have offended anyone; but his intemperate language absolved me, and since he allowed himself to criticize me, he left me free to employ the same right in his regard.

Monsieur Talleyrand's vanity deceived him; he mistook his status for genius; he thought himself a prophet in fooling everyone: his authority regarding future events was worthless: he saw nothing in advance, he only saw in retrospect. Lacking insight and the light of conscience he revealed nothing that superior intellect can, he valued nothing that probity does. He took a leading part in chance events, when those events, which he never foresaw, had occurred, but only on his own behalf. He was ignorant of that breadth of ambition, which submerges personal interests in public glory as the treasure most profitable to private interest. Monsieur de Talleyrand did not belong then to that class of beings fitted to become fantastic creations around which public opinion, deceived or disappointed, is forever weaving its fantasies. Nevertheless it is certain that various sentiments, in sympathy with diverse ideas, worked to create an imaginary Talleyrand.

Firstly that kings, governments, former foreign ministers, and ambassadors were erstwhile dupes of this man, and incapable of grasping him, is proof that they merely obeyed a higher reality: they would have doffed their hats to Bonaparte's kitchen-boy.

Then, the members of the old French aristocracy linked to Monsieur de Talleyrand were proud to have a man among their ranks who was so kind as to reassure them of its importance.

Finally, the revolutionaries and the generations without morals, while ranting against titles, have a secret leaning towards aristocracy: these curious converts willingly seek baptism and think to acquire fine manners by it. At the same time, the Prince's dual apostasy delighted the young democrats' pride in another way: since they concluded from it that their cause was just, and that noblemen and priests are quite contemptible.

Whatever we make of these obstacles to the light, Monsieur de Talleyrand was not great enough to create a lasting illusion; he had not within him enough power of belief to turn his lies into heightened stature. He was seen too clearly; he will not live, because his life was linked neither to a national idea that has survived him, nor a celebrated action, nor peerless talent, nor some useful invention, nor some epoch-making concept. Remembrance with regard to virtue is denied him; danger did not even deign to honor his days; he spent the reign of Terror outside the country, he only returned when the forum transformed itself into the antechamber.

Diplomatic records prove Talleyrand's mediocrity: you cannot cite an action of any worth which is due to him. Under Bonaparte, none of the important negotiations were his; when he was free to act alone he let the opportunity slip and marred what he touched. It is well attested that he brought about the death of the Duc d'Enghien; that bloody stain cannot be effaced: far from having pursued the Minister in my account of the prince's death, I have been too lenient with him.

In his statements in defiance of the truth, Monsieur de Talleyrand displayed fearful effrontery. I have not spoken, in the *Congress of Verona*, of the speech which he made to the Chamber of Peers relative to my address regarding the War in Spain; his speech began with these solemn words:

*'It is sixteen years ago now that, summoned by the man who governed the world at that time, to give him my advice on engaging in conflict with the Spanish people, I had the misfortune to displease him by unveiling the future, by revealing to him all the host of dangers which would ensue from an aggressive action no less unjust than foolhardy. Disgrace was the fruit of my sincerity. A strange fate it is that brings me, after such an extent of time, to make the same effort, and to offer the same counsel, to a legitimate sovereign!'*

There are fits of forgetfulness or deceit which terrify: you open your ears, you rub your eyes, not knowing whether you are awake or asleep. When the imperturbable individual to whom you owe such assertions descends from the rostrum and takes his seat impassively, you follow him with your gaze, suspended as you are between a kind of astonishment and a sort of admiration; you are unsure whether the man has not received some authority from nature giving him the power to recreate or annihilate the truth.

I did not reply; it seemed to me that the shade of Bonaparte would rise to speak, and repeat the terrifying rebuttal he had once given Monsieur de Talleyrand. Witnesses to that scene were still sitting among the Peers, including Monsieur le Comte de Montesquiou; the virtuous Duc de Doudeauville recounted it to me, having heard it from the lips of that same Monsieur de Montesquiou, his brother-in-law; Monsieur le Comte de Cessac, present at the time, repeated his account of it to whoever would listen: he had thought that on leaving the room, the Grand Elector would be arrested. Napoleon, in his anger, shouted at his whey-faced Minister: *'That's fine, for you to speak against the Spanish War, you who advised it, you from whom I have a pile of letters in which you sought to prove to me that such a war was as necessary as it was politic.'* Those letters vanished when the archives were removed from the Tuileries in 1814.

Monsieur de Talleyrand in his speech claimed that he had the *misfortune to displease* Bonaparte by unveiling the future, by revealing all the dangers which would ensue from *an act of aggression no less unjust than foolhardy*. Let Monsieur de Talleyrand console himself in his tomb, he had not that misfortune; he need not add that calamity to his life's afflictions.

Monsieur de Talleyrand's principal crime regarding the Legitimacy was to turn Louis XVIII away from the idea of concluding a marriage between the Duc de Berry and a Russian princess; Monsieur de Talleyrand's inexcusable crime regarding France was to have agreed to the disgusting Treaty of Vienna.

The result of Monsieur de Talleyrand's negotiations was to leave us without proper frontiers: the loss of a battle at Mons or Coblenz would lead in a week to enemy cavalry deploying beneath the walls of Paris. Under the old monarchy, not only was France encircled by a ring of fortresses, but she was protected on the Rhine by the independent States of Germany. An invasion of the Electorates or agreement with them was needed to approach us. On another front, Switzerland remained free and neutral; it possessed few roads; nothing would violate its territory. The Pyrenees were impassable, guarded by the Spanish Bourbons. Monsieur de Talleyrand understood none of this; such are the crimes that will condemn him forever as a statesman: crimes that robbed us in a day of Louis XIV's labors and Napoleon's victories.

They claim that he was Napoleon's political superior: firstly it is necessary to bear in mind that in carrying the portfolio of a conqueror, who every morning issues a victory bulletin and alters the boundaries of States, one is a clerk pure and simple. When Napoleon was elated, he made enormous errors obvious to all: Monsieur de Talleyrand saw them as clearly as everyone else; but that required no lynx-eyed vision. He compromised himself in a curious manner in the affair of the Duc d'Enghien; he was wrong about the Spanish War, though he later sought to deny his advice and retract his words.

Yet an actor gains no prestige if he is utterly lacking in the means to entertain the stalls: and the Prince's life was a perpetual deception. Knowing what he lacked, he hid from whatever might reveal him: his constant study was to avoid assessment; he withdrew into opportune silence; he concealed himself in the three silent hours he gave to whist. One marvels that such a genius could descend to vulgar amusement: who knows if that genius was not sharing out empires while arranging the suits in his hand? During those moments of evasion, he would dream up a witty phrase, whose inspiration came to him from a leaflet that morning, or a conversation that night. If he took you aside to distinguish you by his conversation, his principal means of seducing you was to shower you with praise, to call you the hope of the future, to predict a brilliant career for you, to give you a nobleman's bill of exchange to be drawn on him and payable on sight; but if he found your faith in him the least bit suspect, if he perceived that you had insufficient admiration for a few brief phrases with pretensions to profundity, in which there was nothing, he shrank with fear lest he display the contents of his mind. He would happily have told all, were his pleasantries only to fall on some subaltern or a fool, with whom he could amuse himself without risk, or a victim attached to his person and a foil for his raillery. He could not pursue a serious conversation; when his lips had opened thrice, his ideas expired.

Old engravings of the Abbé de Périgord reveal a highly attractive individual; Monsieur de Talleyrand turned into a death's-head as he aged: his eyes were dull, such that it was hard to read them, which served him well; as he was the frequent recipient of contempt, he had absorbed it, and it showed at the drooping corners of his mouth.



A grand manner belonging to his lineage, the rigorous observation of the proprieties, a cold and disdainful air, contributed to nourish the illusions adhering to the Prince of Benevento. His Imperial manner was practiced on petty individuals and the men of the new society, who knew nothing of the society of the past. Formerly one met people, at every corner, whose allure resembled that of Monsieur de Talleyrand, and one took no notice of it; but almost alone among the democratic mores, he seemed a phenomenon: to suffer the yoke of propriety, it suited his self-esteem to imbue his Ministerial wit with the influence exercised by his education.

When while occupying high office one finds oneself involved in mighty revolutions, they give one a chance importance that the crowd takes for personal merit; lost in Bonaparte's radiance Monsieur de Talleyrand nevertheless shone, under the Restoration, with the borrowed light of a destiny not his own. The accidental situation of the Prince of Benevento allowed him to attribute to himself the power of having overthrown Napoleon, and the honor of having re-established Louis XVIII on the throne; I myself, like all the idle onlookers, was I not foolish enough as to subscribe to that fable! Better informed, I understood that Monsieur de Talleyrand was no Warwick the Kingmaker: his arms lacked the strength that pulls down and restores monarchies.

Impartial simpletons said: *'We admit he is a very immoral person, but how skillful!'* Alas, no! That last hope must be foregone, so consoling for his supporters, so desirable for the prince's memory, the hope of making a daemon out of Monsieur de Talleyrand.

Beyond certain commonplace negotiations, in the course of which he was skillful enough as to place his own personal interests first, nothing much was required of Monsieur de Talleyrand.

Monsieur de Talleyrand prided himself on a few habits and maxims employed by his private hangers-on and wretched subjects. His appearance when in public, modelled on that of a Viennese Minister, was the peak of his diplomacy. He prided himself on never being under pressure; he said that time is our enemy and must be slain: based on that he promoted himself as rarely being busy.

But as, in the last result, Monsieur de Talleyrand could not transform his idle hours into masterpieces, it is likely that he was wrong to speak of the necessity of abolishing time: one conquers time only by creating immortal things; by effort with no future, by frivolous distraction, one does not slay it: one expends it.

Entering government on Madame de Staël's recommendation, she obtaining his nomination from Chénier, Monsieur de Talleyrand, then quite destitute, made his fortune five or six times over: through the million he received from Portugal which hoped to sign a peace treaty with the Directory, a peace which was never signed; through buying Belgian bonds at the time of the Peace of Amiens, which he, Monsieur de Talleyrand, knew about before it was known to the public; through the creation of the transient kingdom of Etruria; through the secularization of ecclesiastical property in Germany; and through passing on second-hand his opinions of the *Congress of Vienna*. It was not merely the old papers from our archives that the Prince wished to yield to Austria: duped on that occasion by Prince von Metternich, the latter religiously returned the originals having had a copy made.

Incapable of writing even a phrase, Monsieur de Talleyrand obtained competent work from those under him: when, despite deletions and alterations, his secretary managed to write his dispatches to his liking, he copied them in his own hand. I have heard him read some pleasing passages, on his youth, from the

beginning of his *memoirs*. As his tastes varied, he detesting the next day what he had loved the day before, then if those memoirs exist in their entirety, which I doubt, and if the contrasting versions have been preserved, his judgements on any given event and above all on any one individual will be outrageously self-contradictory. I do not believe there are any manuscripts stored in England; the command it is claimed that he gave not to publish them for forty years seems to me a posthumous juggling-trick.

Lazy and unstudied, of a frivolous and dissipated nature, the Prince of Benevento gloried in what should have humbled his pride, the feat of remaining standing after the fall of empires. Spirits of the first order who make revolutions vanish; spirits of the second order who profit from them remain. These latter-day industrialized personages assist in the march of generations; they are charged with stamping visas on passports, with ratifying decisions: Monsieur de Talleyrand was of that inferior species; he countersigned events, he did not create them.

To survive governments, to remain when power dissipates, to declare oneself a permanent fixture, to boast of belonging to the country alone, of being a man of things and not a man of individuals, is a fatuity of insecure egoism, which tries to hide its lack of height in lofty words. Today there are hosts of characters possessing that equanimity, hosts of those citizens of the earth: however, in order for there to be greatness in growing old like a hermit among the ruins of the Coliseum, they must be guarded by the cross; Monsieur de Talleyrand has trodden his underfoot.

Our species divides into two unequal parts: the men of death beloved of it, a select band that is re-born; and the men of life forgotten by life, a multitude of nobodies who are not. The transient existence of the latter consists of a name, credit, a position, wealth; their fame, their authority, their power vanish with their person: their rooms and their coffin once closed, so is their destiny. That is what has happened to Monsieur de Talleyrand; his mummy, before descending into the crypt, was exposed for a moment in London, as representing the royal cadaver that rules us.

Monsieur de Talleyrand betrayed every government, and, I repeat, he neither created nor destroyed one. He had no real superiority, in the true meaning of those words. A minnow of banal prosperity, so common among the aristocracy, cannot step two paces beyond the grave. Evil which does not manifest itself in some terrible explosion, evil parsimoniously employed by the slave to his master's profit, is mere depravity. Vice, tolerant of crime, becomes domesticated. Imagine a plebeian Monsieur de Talleyrand, poor and obscure, possessing along with his immorality only his incontestable salon wit, and one would surely never have heard a word about him. Remove from Monsieur de Talleyrand the Grand Seigneur debased, the married priest, the degraded bishop, and what remains? His reputation and success depended on those three depravations.

The comedy with which the prelate crowned his eighty-four years was a pitiful thing: firstly, to prove his strength, he went to the Institute to pronounce the common eulogy on a poor German idiot whom he cared nothing for. Despite our eyes having had their fill of spectacle, people made haste to see the great man appear; then he died at home, like Diocletian, displaying himself to the world. The crowd gaped; in this three-quarters putrefied Prince's last moments, a gangrenous wound in his side, his head falling onto his chest despite the bandage which restrained it, playing out minute by minute his reconciliation with Heaven, his niece playing a role arranged at a distance between a deluded priest and a deceived granddaughter: he signed with wearisome difficulty (or perhaps did not even sign), when his speech was almost

extinguished, a disavowal of his previous adherence to the constitutional Church; but without giving any sign of repentance, without fulfilling the last duties of a Christian, without retracting the immoral and scandalous actions of his life. Never has pride shown itself so wretched, admiration appeared so foolish, and piety been so deceived: Rome, ever prudent, has not made the retraction public, and with good reason.

Monsieur de Talleyrand, called at a late date to the great tribunal, was sentenced in absentia; death sought him on behalf of God, and found him at last. To analyze minutely a life as marred as that of Monsieur de Lafayette was whole, means confronting distasteful things that I am incapable of handling. Corrupt men resemble prostitutes' corpses: the ulcers have gnawed them so much they cannot be dissected. The French Revolution was a vast act of political destruction at the heart of previous society: let us fear lest it creates a more fatal act of destruction, let us fear moral destruction hand in hand with that Revolution's evils. What would become of the human race if people tried to bring back ways of life that have rightly atrophied, if they attempted to offer up for our enthusiastic reception odious examples, to present the century's progress, the establishment of liberty, or depth of genius to us, in the form of abject natures or atrocious actions? Not daring to advocate evil under its true name, people employ sophistry: be careful not to mistake that brute for a spirit of darkness, it is an angel of light! All ugliness is beautiful; every disgrace is honorable; every enormity is sublime; and every vice has its attendant admirers. We have returned to that materialistic pagan society where every depravity had its altars. Behind such praise, lie the cowards, liars, and criminals, who warp the public conscience, debauch youth, discourage the good, who are an outrage to virtue, and who spit like the Roman soldier into Christ's face!

BOOK XLII  
CHAPTER 9  
The Death of Charles X

*Paris, 1839*

When I was in Prague in 1833, Charles X said to me: ‘*Is old Talleyrand still alive then?*’ And yet Charles X left this life two years before Monsieur de Talleyrand; the private and Christian death of the monarch contrasted with the public death of the apostate bishop, dragged recalcitrant to the feet of divine incorruptibility.

On the 3rd of October 1836 I wrote the following letter to Madame la Duchesse de Berry and added a postscript on the 15th November of that year:

‘*Madame,*

*Monsieur Walsh has sent me the letter with which you choose to honor me. I would be ready to obey Your Royal Highness’ wishes, if writing could achieve anything at present; but public opinion has fallen into such a state of apathy that the greatest events would scarcely rouse it. You have allowed me, Madame, to speak to you with a freedom that my devotion alone might excuse: Your Royal Highness knows I have been opposed to almost everything that has been done; I even dared to disagree with your trip to Prague. Henri V is no longer a child; he will soon enter society with an education which has taught him nothing of the century in which we live. Who will be his guide, who will show him courts and men? Who will make him understand how to present himself to France from afar? Important questions which, probably and unfortunately, will be resolved in the same way as all the others have been. Be that as it may, the remainder of my life belongs to my young king and his august mother. My predictions as to the future will never make me forget my duty.*

*Madame de Chateaubriand begs permission to lay her respects at Your Majesty’s feet. I offer all my prayers to Heaven for the glory and prosperity of Henri V’s mother and I am with profound respect,*

*Madame,*

*Your Royal Highness’ very humble and obedient servant,*

CHATEAUBRIAND

*P.S. This letter has been waiting a month for an opportunity to send it to Madame securely. Today I learnt of the death of Henri’s august grand-father. Will that sad news bring any change in Your Royal Highness’ fate? May I dare to beg Madame to permit me to share in all the feelings of sorrow that she must be experiencing, and to offer the respectful tribute of my grief to Monsieur le Dauphin and Madame la Dauphine?*

CHATEAUBRIAND

*15th November.’*

Charles X is no more.

*Sixty years of misfortune adorned the victim!*

Thirty years of exile; death at seventy-nine in a foreign land! So that none might doubt the unfortunate fate with which Heaven had charged the Prince in this world, the scourge came seeking him.

**Charles X** at his last hour found the peace and equanimity of spirit which he sometimes lacked in his long career. When he learnt of the danger threatening him, he contented himself with saying: *'I did not think this illness would end so quickly.'* When **Louis XVI** departed for the scaffold, the officer in charge refused to accept the condemned man's last testament because time was short, and he, the officer, had to conduct the King to his execution: the King replied: *'That is only right.'* If Charles X, at other times of danger, had treated his life with such indifference, what miseries he would have been spared! It seems the **Bourbons** believe in a religion which renders them noble in their final hour: **Louis IX**, blessing his descendants, sends his saintly courage to await them at the edge of the grave. That race indeed knows how to die: true, it has had more than eight centuries to learn death.

Charles X died persuaded that he was not mistaken: if he hoped for divine mercy, it is because of the sacrifice he believed he had made of his throne for what he considered to be the duty of his conscience and the good of his nation: conviction is too rare to be dismissed. Charles X was able in that way to bear witness that the reign of his two brothers and his own had not lacked freedom or glory: under the martyred king, America's enfranchisement and France's emancipation; under **Louis XVIII**, representative government for our country, and the re-establishment of a working monarchy in Spain; under Charles X, Greek independence achieved at Navarino, Africa left to us in compensation for the territory lost along with the conquests of the Republic and Empire: those are the results which still speak of our splendor despite stupid jealousies and vain enmities. Those results will become more glaring the deeper we sink in the abasement of the July Monarchy. But it is to be feared that those priceless ornaments will only redound to the glory of vanished days, as the chaplet of flowers on Homer's brow was respectfully banished from Plato's Republic. The Legitimacy seems now to have no desire to continue; it appears to have accepted its fall.

The death of Charles X would be a significant event if it put an end to the deplorable struggle over the crown and set a new direction for Henri V's education: now, it is to be feared that the exiled crown will always be in dispute; that his education will be completed virtually without change. Perhaps, by sparing himself the pain of involvement, he will slumber among those habits dear to powerlessness, kind to family life, soothing to the lassitude that succeeds lengthy suffering. Misfortune when perpetuated produces the effect of old age on the body: one cannot stir: one rests. Misfortune even seems the executor of Heaven's high justice: it strips the condemned man of everything, snatches away the king's scepter, and the officer's sword; it robs the nobleman of his propriety, the soldier of his courage, and pushes them degraded into the crowd.

On the other hand, from extreme youth one derives reasons for procrastination: when one has plenty of time to expend one is persuaded one can afford to wait; there are years to gamble on events: *'It will come to us,'* people say, *'without us putting ourselves to any trouble; everything has to ripen, the monarchy's day will arrive of its own accord; in twenty years the prejudice against it will have vanished.'* That

calculation might be credible to some extent if generations did not pass and become gradually indifferent; but something may seem essential to one epoch that is not even considered by another.

Alas! How quickly things vanish! Where are the three brothers whose reigns I witnessed in succession? Louis XVIII is at Saint-Denis with the mutilated remains of Louis XVI; Charles X has just been laid to rest at Goritz, in a tomb with three locks.

The remains of that king fallen from on high have troubled his ancestors; they have turned about in their sepulchre; squeezing together they have said: *'Take your places: here is the last of us.'* Bonaparte made less noise on entering eternal night: the ancient dead did not wake to greet the Emperor of the recent dead. They failed to recognize him. The French monarchy binds the ancient world to the modern. Romulus Augustus relinquished the crown in 476. Five years later, in 481, our first line of kings reigned, with Clovis, over the Gauls.

Charlemagne, in bringing Louis the Debonair to the throne, said: *'My son, beloved of God, my years flee, and old age itself escapes me; the time of my death approaches. The land of the Franks saw my birth. Christ accorded me that honor. First among the Franks I took the name of Caesar and tied the Empire of the Franks to the race of Romulus.'*

Under Hugh Capet, with the third lineage, the elected monarchy became hereditary. Heredity gave birth to legitimacy, permanence, duration.

The Christian Empire of the French may be said to have run its course between the baptismal font of Clovis and the scaffold of Louis XVI. The one religion stood beside those marks: *'Gentle Sicambrian, bow your head, adore what you once burned: burn what you once adored,'* said the priest who administered baptism by water to Clovis. *'Scion of Saint Louis, mount to Heaven,'* said the priest who assisted at Louis XVI's baptism of blood.

When there was only this one ancient house in France, weathered by time whose majesty astonished, we could, by reason of illustrious events, display our superiority over all other nations. The Capets reigned when other European sovereigns were still subject. Our kings' vassals became kings. Those sovereigns left us their names and titles which posterity has judged authentic: some were called *august, saintly, pious, great, courteous, bold, wise, victorious, well-beloved*; others *father of the nation, father of learning*. *'As it has been maliciously written,'* says an old historian, *'that all the good kings could easily be portrayed in a ring, the bad kings of France could be portrayed more easily still, so small is their number.'*

Under the monarchy, the barbarian darkness was dissipated, the language formed, masterpieces of art and literature were produced, our towns were embellished, monuments raised, roads opened, harbors built, our armies astonished Europe and Asia, our fleets spanned the oceans.

Our pride is irked merely by the exhibition of those magnificent tapestries of the Louvre; ghosts, even embroidered ones, trouble us. Unknown this morning, yet more unknown this evening, we are no less convinced that we outshine what came before us. And yet, every moment, as we vanish, we ask ourselves: *'What are you?'* and do not know what to reply. Charles X has replied; he has departed along with a whole age of the world; his dust has mingled with the dust of a thousand generations; history salutes him,

the centuries kneel beside his tomb; everyone knew his lineage; it did not fail them, it was they who were found wanting.

Exiled king, men were able to proscribe you, but you will not be driven from history, you will sleep your harsh sleep in a monastery, beneath the last plank of a coffin once destined for some Franciscan. No heralds of arms attend your obsequies, only a crowd of ancient years blanched and withered; no great men cast their noble emblems into the vault, they have paid their homage elsewhere. Silent centuries are seated beside your bier: a long procession of past days, their eyes closed, lead the silent mourning round your tomb.

At your side rest your heart and entrails cut from your breast and side, as one places the abortive fruit of her womb that cost her life beside a dead mother. Each year, Christian monarch, a monk after your death, some brother will recite to you the prayers for the Old Year; you will only attract to your eternal resting place those descendants exiled with you: for even the tomb of Mesdames at Trieste is empty; their country has seen their sacred relics once more and you have paid those noble ladies debt to exile, by your exile.

Ah! Why do they not reunite those scattered remains now, as they bring together antiques found in different excavations? The Arc de Triomphe might bear Napoleon's sarcophagus as a crown, the column of bronze might rise over the immortal remains of motionless victories. And yet the pillar cut by order of Sesostris now buries Louis XVI's scaffold beneath the weight of centuries. The hour will come when that obelisk from the desert will once again know, in the place where murder was done, the silence and the solitude of Luxor.

## BOOK XLII

### CONCLUSION

*25th of September 1841*

I began these *Memoirs* at the Vallée-aux-Loups on the 4th of October 1811; I have finished re-reading and correcting them in Paris this 25th of September 1841: for twenty-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-one days therefore, I have been exercising my pen secretly while composing my published books, in the midst of all the revolutions and vicissitudes of my existence. My hand is tired: may it not have weighed down my ideas which have never weakened and which I conceive as vividly now as at the start of my career! I intended to add a general conclusion to my thirty years' labor; I planned, as I have often remarked, to comment on the state of the world when I entered it, and how it appears as I leave it. But the hour-glass is before me, I can see the hand sailors one believed they saw emerging from the waves at the moment of shipwreck: that hand bids me be brief; I will therefore reduce the scale of the picture without omitting anything essential.



## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 10

Historic antecedents: from the Regency to 1793

Louis XIV died. The Duc d'Orléans was Regent during the minority of Louis XV. War with Spain broke out, followed by the Cellamare conspiracy: peace was re-established with the fall of Alberoni. Louis XV attained his majority on the 15th of February 1723. The Regent succumbed ten months later. He had communicated his gangrene to France, placing Dubois in Fénelon's chair, and elevating Law. The Duc de Bourbon became Louis XV's First Minister, and he had as successor Cardinal Fleury whose genius consisted in his years. In 1734, the war broke out in which my father was wounded before Danzig. In 1745 the Battle of Fontenoy was fought; one of the least bellicose of our kings brought us victory in the only great classic battle we have won against the English, and the conqueror of the world added at Waterloo one more disaster to those of Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt. The church of Waterloo is adorned with the names of English officers who fell in 1815; in the church of Fontenoy there is only a stone with these words: *'Before this stone there lies the body of Messire Philippe de Vitry who, aged twenty-seven, was killed at the Battle of Fontenoy on the 11th of May 1745.'* No marker indicates the site of the action; but they dig skeletons from the earth with flattened musket-balls in their skulls. The French bear their victories written on their brows.

Much later the Comte de Gisors, son of the Marshal of Belle-Isle, fell at Krefeld. With him the name and direct line of Fouquet was extinguished. The world passed from Mademoiselle de La Vallière to Madame de Chateauroux. There is something sad in seeing great names vanish, from century to century, beauty to beauty, glory to glory.

In June 1745 the Young Pretender began his adventure: misfortunes which I was nurtured on while waiting for Henri V to replace the English Pretender in exile.

The end of those wars announced our disasters in the colonies. La Bourdonnais avenged the French flag in Asia; his dispute with Dupleix after the taking of Madras ruined everything. The peace of 1748 suspended these misfortunes; hostilities recommenced in 1755; they opened with the Lisbon earthquake in which Racine's grandson died. Under the pretext of some disputed territory on the Acadian border, the English without declaring war seized three hundred of our merchant vessels; we lost Canada: events immense in their consequences on which depended the deaths of Wolfe and Montcalm. Despoiled of our possessions in Africa and India, Lord Clive began the conquest of Bengal. Now, during that period, the Jansenist disputes took place; Damiens was executed by Louis XV; Poland was partitioned, the expulsion of the Jesuits carried out, the court stooped to the Parc aux Cerfs. The author of the Family Compact retired to Chanteloup, while an intellectual revolution took place led by Voltaire. Maupeou's plenary court was installed: Louis XV left the scaffold to his favorite whom he had degraded, having passed Garat and Sanson on to Louis XVI, the one to read, and the other to execute his sentence.

The latter monarch was married on the 16th of May 1770 to the daughter of Maria Theresa of Austria: we are only too aware of what happened to her. Ministers came and went: Machault, the aged Maurepas, the economist Turgot, Malesherbes of ancient virtue and new opinions, Saint-Germain who destroyed the King's house and gave out the fatal decree; Calonne and finally Necker.

Louis XVI recalled the Parliament, abolished feudal labor, abrogated torture before sentencing, and gave the Protestants civil rights, by recognizing their marriages as legal. Support for American independence in the war of 1779, unwise for France always duped by her own generosity, was of benefit to the human race; it re-established respect for our armies and the honor of our flag throughout the whole world.

The Revolution arose ready to reveal the generation of warriors that eight centuries of heroism had lodged in its side. Louis XVI's merits could not redeem the faults that his ancestors had left him to expiate; but the blows of Providence fall on the evil, not on the man: God only abridges the days of virtue on earth to prolong them in Heaven. Beneath the comet of 1793, the waters of the deep were unleashed; all our past glories united and lit their last fire in Bonaparte: he brought them back to us in his coffin.

## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 11

#### The Past – The old European Order expires

I was born during these events. Two new empires, Prussia and Russia, preceded me by barely a half-century on this earth: Corsica became French at the moment I appeared; I arrived in the world twenty days after Bonaparte. He brought me with him. I was about to enter the Navy in 1783 when Louis XVI's fleet put in to Brest: it carried the birth certificate of a nation hatched beneath the wings of France. My birth is connected with the birth of a man and a people: pale reflection that I was of an immense light.

If one's gaze is fixed on the world of today, one sees it shaken, as a result of the movement initiated by a great revolution, from the Middle East to a China which seemed forever closed; such that our past upheavals will be as nothing, and the noise of Napoleon's fame barely audible in the general convulsion of nations, just as he, Napoleon, drowned out the noise of our former world.

The Emperor left us in a state of prophetic unrest. We, the most mature and advanced of countries, display numerous signs of decadence. As a sick man in peril is preoccupied with the afterlife, a failing nation is troubled about its future fate. From that arises a succession of political heresies. The old European order is expiring; our current debates will appear as futile quarrels in the eyes of posterity. Nothing else survives: the authority derived from age and experience, birth or genius, talent or virtue, all is denied; a few individuals climb to the summit of the ruins, proclaim themselves giants, and tumble to the bottom like pygmies. Except for a score of men who will endure, and who are destined to carry the torch across the shadowy steppes we enter; except for those few men, a generation which carries within it abundant spirit, acquired knowledge, the germs of all kinds of success, has stifled all in a disquiet as unproductive as its magnificence is barren. Nameless multitudes stir without knowing why, like the popular movements of the Middle Ages: starving flocks without a master, that rush from the mountain to the plain, from the plain to the mountain, ignoring experienced shepherds hardened to wind and sun. In the life of a city all is transitory: religion and morality cease to be acknowledged, or each interprets them in their own way. Among things in their nature inferior, even in their very power of conviction and existence, a reputation scarce lasts an hour, a book ages in a day, writers kill themselves to attract attention; yet more vanity: their last cry is not even heard.

Given this tendency it follows that no other means of moving people exists but scenes of the scaffold and a tarnished morality: they forget that the true tears are those a fine poetic engenders, and with which as much admiration as sorrow is mingled; but now that talent feeds on the Regency and the Terror, what need of subjects for those destined so soon to die? The thoughts of human genius, that become a common legacy, will no longer arise.

This is what everyone says and what everyone deplores, yet illusions abound, the nearer we are to dying the more we believe we will live. You can gaze at monarchs who imagine they are monarchs, ministers who think they are ministers, deputies who take their speeches seriously, and proprietors who in possession this morning are convinced they will be in possession tonight. Private interests, personal ambitions hide the gravity of the moment from the vulgar: notwithstanding the fluctuations of daily affairs, they are only ripples on the surface of the abyss; they do not lessen the depth of the waters. Amidst petty inessential lotteries, the human race plays the main chance; kings still hold the cards and

hold them on behalf of nations: will the latter show any improvement on those monarchs? That is a separate question, which does not alter the main issue. What importance do childish amusements have: shadows sliding over the whiteness of a shroud? The invasion of ideas has succeeded barbarian invasion; the civilization of today, decomposing, melts into itself; the vessel which contains it has not decanted its contents into a second vessel; the vessel itself lies shattered.

## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 12

#### Inequality of wealth – Dangers in the nature of intellectual and material growth

When will society disappear? What accidents will suspend its movements? In Rome, the reign of man replaced the reign of law: the Romans passed from republic to empire; our revolution is fulfilling itself in a contrary direction: we are ready to pass from monarchy to republic, or not to specify the exact form, to democracy; it will not be achieved without problems.

To mention only one point in a thousand, will property, for example, remain distributed as it is? The monarchy born at Rheims was able to perpetuate that system of property by tempering its harshness with a diffusion of moral law, just as it changed humaneness into charity. Can a political situation exist in which some individuals have an income of millions, while others die of hunger, when religion is no longer there with its other-worldly hopes to justify the sacrifice? There are children whom their mothers nurture at flaccid breasts for lack of a mouthful of bread with which to feed their dying offspring; there are families whose members are reduced to huddling together at night for want of blankets to warm them. This man sees his countless furrows bear a harvest; that one will never own more than the six feet of earth his native country allots to his grave. Now, how many ears of corn can six feet of earth yield?

As education reaches down to the lower classes, they will discover the secret cancer that gnaws away at the irreligious social order. The excessive disproportion of wealth and living conditions was accepted while it was implicit; but as soon as that disproportion was generally perceived, the old order received its death-blow. Recreate the aristocratic fictions if you can; try to convince the poor, when they have been taught to read and no longer believe, once they are as well-educated as you, try to persuade them then that they must submit to every kind of privation, while their neighbors possess a thousand times their needs: as a last recourse you will have to kill them.

When steam-power has been perfected, when, united with railways and the telegraph, it has abolished distance, it will not be merely goods that travel but ideas too, re-equipped with wings. When the fiscal and trade barriers between various States have been removed, as they have already been removed between the provinces of individual States; when different countries in daily contact seek the unity of all nations, how will you revive former modes of separation?

On the other hand, Society is no less threatened by developments of a material nature than it is by the spread of knowledge. Imagine labor condemned to idleness by the multiplicity and variety of new machines; conceive the idea of matter, as a single universal servant, replacing the paid servants of house and farm: what will you do with the unemployed human race? What will you do with the passions fallen idle along with intellect? A vigorous body is maintained by physical exercise; if work ceases, strength fails; we will become like those Asiatic peoples, prey to the first invader, unable to defend themselves against the hand that bore a sword. Thus freedom is only preserved by effort, because effort produces strength: remove the curse pronounced against the sons of Adam: '*In sudore vultus tui, vesceris pane: in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread*' and they will die in slavery. The divine curse therefore enters into the mystery of our fate; man is less the slave of his sweat than of his thought: that is why, after studying society as a whole, after passing through various degrees of civilization, after imagining new forms of progress, one finds oneself at the start once more, in the presence of Scriptural truths.

## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 13

The demise of monarchy – The withering away of society and the progress of the individual

Europe possessed in France, during our eight centuries of monarchy, the core of its intellectual life, its permanence and its peace; deprived of that monarchy, Europe immediately inclined towards democracy. The human race has come of age, for good or evil; princes have played the role of guardians; the nations, reaching their majority, claim they have no need now of teachers. From King David's time to ours, kings have been '*called*' to the throne: now the people's vocation begins. The brief and minor exceptions of the Greek, Carthaginian and Roman Republics, the latter with its slave class, did not prevent the monarchical system being the norm throughout the globe. The whole of modern society, now that the banner of the kings of France no longer exists, has deserted monarchy. God, to hasten the decline of royal power, has handed the scepter to a valueless royalty in several countries, to little girls in their chemises or their white wedding robes: likewise toothless lions, lionesses without claws, infants betrothed or still at the breast, are destined to succeed mature men, in this era of unbelief.

The boldest principles are proclaimed in the face of monarchs who imagine themselves safe behind the triple barrier of an unreliable guard. Democracy is gaining on them; they mount from stair to stair, from the ground-floor to the attics of their palaces, to plunge from them via the sky-lights into the flood.

In the midst of all this, note a remarkable contradiction: our material state improves, intellectual progress accelerates, yet the nations instead of benefiting suffer: from what source does this contradiction arise?

It is because we have lost our moral sense. There have always been crimes; but they were never committed as cold-bloodedly as in our day, because of the loss of religious feeling. Now they no longer cause revulsion, they appear a consequence of progress; if they were judged differently in times past it was because, so people dare claim, knowledge of the human race was not as advanced; now people analyze them; they try them out in a crucible, in order to see what can be usefully got from them, as chemists extract compounds from ordure. Corruption of the spirit, destructive in quite a different manner to that of the senses, is accepted as a necessary outcome; it is no longer just a feature of perverse individuals, it has entered the public domain.

Such people would be humbled were one to prove that they possessed a soul, that beyond this life they would discover another; they would consider they lacked steadfastness, strength and genius if they could not rise above the faint-heartedness of our forefathers; they accept nothingness, or, if you prefer it, doubt, as a disagreeable reality, but a truth that cannot be denied. Admire our dazzling pride!

This is the explanation for the withering away of society and the increase in importance of the individual. If moral sense had developed with the development of understanding, it would provide a counterweight and humanity could develop without risk, but quite the contrary is happening: the perception of good and evil is being obscured as the mind becomes enlightened; conscience is shrinking as ideas expand. Yes, society will perish: freedom, which might save the world, will not advance, without leaning on religion; order, which might maintain a balance, cannot be solidly established, because the anarchy of ideas opposes it. The purple robe, which once evidenced power, will serve from now on only as a couch for misfortune: nothing can be saved that is not born, like Christ, among the straw. When the monarchs were disinterred at Saint-Denis, at that moment when the trumpet sounded the resurrection of nations; when,

dragged from their shattered tombs, they awaited a plebeian grave, the rag and bone merchants achieved a last judgement over the centuries: they watched with their lanterns in the eternal night; they rummaged among the remnants that escaped the first pillage. The kings were no longer there, but royalty was: they snatched it from time's entrails, and threw it in the rubbish basket.

## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 14

#### The Future – The difficulty of comprehending it

For the old Europe, then, there is no return. Does the young Europe offer more hope? The world now, the world without consecrated authority, seems lodged between two impossibilities: the impossible past, and an impossible future. And do not believe, as some imagine, that if things are in evil straights at present, good will be reborn from evil; human nature troubled at its source cannot make such easy progress. For example, the excesses of freedom lead to tyranny; but the excesses of tyranny lead only to greater tyranny; the latter by degrading us renders us incapable of liberty: Tiberius did not return Rome to a republic; he left Caligula as his successor.

To evade explanation, people are content to say that time may be concealing in its breast a political constitution we have not yet seen. Could the whole of antiquity, the greatest geniuses of antiquity, comprehend a society without slaves? And we see it still in existence. They claim that in the civilization yet to be born the species will become greater; I myself once advanced that statement; yet is it not to be feared that the individual is diminishing? We may toil together in future like bees preoccupied with our honey. In the *material* world men associate to work, a multitude arrives more swiftly and by multiple paths at what it seeks; masses of individuals can raise Pyramids; studying in their own specialty, those individuals will meet together in scientific discovery; they will explore all the corners of the physical creation. But is there anything equivalent in the *moral* world? A thousand minds might well coalesce, but they will never compose the masterpiece which issued from Homer's brain.

It has been said that a city whose members shared an equal division of possessions and education would present a nobler spectacle to the Divinity than the cities of our forefathers. Present folly seeks the unity of nations and not the creation of a single man from the entire species, so be it; but in acquiring general capabilities, will not a whole set of private sentiments perish? Farewell the tenderness of the fireside; farewell delight in family; among all the beings white, yellow or black, claimed as your compatriots, you will be unable to throw yourself on a brother's breast. Was there nothing in that life of other days, nothing in that narrow space you gazed at from your ivy-framed window? Beyond your horizon you suspected unknown countries of which the bird of passage, the only voyager you saw in autumn, barely told you. It was happiness to think that the hills enclosing you would not vanish before your eyes; that they would surround your loves and friendships; that the sighing of night around your sanctuary would be the only sound to accompany your sleep; that the solitude of your soul would never be troubled, that you would always find your thoughts there, waiting for you, to take up again their familiar conversation. You knew where you were born; you knew where your grave would be; penetrating the forests you could say:

*'Fair trees that once saw my beginning,  
Soon you will witness my end.'*

Man has no need to travel to become greater; he bears immensity within. The accents escaping from your breast are immeasurable and find an echo in thousands of other souls: those who lack the melody within themselves will demand it of the universe in vain. Sit on the trunk of a fallen tree in the depths of the woods; if in profound forgetfulness of yourself, in immobility, in silence, you fail to find the infinite, it is useless to wander the shores of the Ganges seeking it.



What would a universal society without individual lands look like, which would be neither French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Tartar, Turkish, Persian, Indian, Chinese, or American, or rather would be all of those societies at once? What would be the effect on morality, the sciences, the arts, poetry? How would the passions felt by different peoples in different climes be simultaneously expressed? How would that confusion of needs and images, the product of different lands where the sun lit a common youth, maturity, and old age be grasped by language? And which language would it be? Will a universal idiom result from the fusion of societies, where some dialect serves for daily transactions, while each nation continues to speak its own language, or perhaps the various languages will be understood by all? What common government, what single set of laws would embrace that society? How would one find space on an earth enlarged by the power of ubiquity, yet shrunk to the smaller proportions of a globe everywhere explored? It would only remain to demand of science some means of transferring to another planet.

## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 15

Saint-Simonians – Phalansterians – Fouriérist – Owenites – Socialists –  
Communists – Unionists – Egalitarians

Weary of individual property, would you make government the sole proprietor, distributing to the possession-less community an amount tailored to the merits of each individual? Who will judge those merits? Who will have the power and authority to have those judgements carried out? Who will administer and value that bank of living assets?

Do you look to labor associations? What will the weak, the sick, and the unintelligent bring to the community burdened by their ineptitude?

Another option: you might create, while replacing wages, various kinds of anonymous society or partnership between manufacturers and workers, between intellect and matter, to which the former would bring capital and ideas, the others their industry and labor; one could share out the profits arising. That is fine, complete perfection achieved among men; fine indeed so long as there is no dispute, no avarice, no envy: but if a single association makes demands, the whole thing collapses; lawsuits and division commence. That method while more credible in theory is also quite impossible in practice.

Do you seek, from a combined approach, the building of a city where each man possesses a roof, a hearth, clothes, and sufficient food? When you come to endow each citizen, qualities and faults will upset your division or render it unjust: this man needs considerably more food than that; that man cannot do as much as this man; careful and hard-working individuals will become wealthy, spendthrifts, idlers, and the sick will fall back into misery; for you cannot give all men the same temperament: natural inequality will re-appear despite all your efforts.

And do not imagine that we will leave ourselves entangled in the legal precautions and complexities which the organization of the family, matrimonial rights, guardianships, the prior claims of heirs and successors etc. demand. Marriage is a notoriously absurd oppression: we will abolish all that. If the son kills the father, it is not the son, as is easily proven, who commits parricide: it is the father who by living murders the son. Let us not trouble our heads therefore with the labyrinths of an edifice which we are razing to the ground; it is pointless to keep our grand-fathers' useless trifles.

That notwithstanding, there are among the modern sectarians those who, glimpsing the impossibility of their doctrines, mix words of morality and religion with them, to make them palatable; they think that while awaiting better, they might attract us first of all to more mediocre American ideals; they shut their eyes and clearly choose to forget that the Americans are proprietors and ardent proprietors, which alters the issue somewhat.

Others, yet more obliging, who admit that civilization has a kind of elegance, would be content to transform us into *constitutional* Chinese, almost atheist, free and enlightened old creatures, sitting for centuries in our yellow robes among our flower beds, spending our days in as comfortable a state as everyone else, in peace, in the midst of our achieved progress, and only packing ourselves on board train, like a consignment, in order to travel from Canton to the Great Wall to discuss a marsh to be drained, or a

canal to be dug, with some other industrialist of the Celestial Empire. On either supposition, American or Chinese, I would be happy to depart before such felicity was mine.

One solution remains: it may be that as the result of a complete debasement of human character, the nations will settle for what they have: they will lose the love of independence, replacing it with love of money, while kings lose their love of power, exchanging it for love of the Civil List. From that would derive a compromise between monarchs and subjects delighted to scramble willy-nilly into an illegitimate political order; at their ease, they would display their infirmities before each other, like the lepers of old, or as in those mud-holes into which the sick of today plunge to soothe themselves; they would paddle through a single mire like peaceable reptiles.

Yet it would be wrong to wish, given the current state of our society, to replace the pleasures of intellectual life with joys of a physical nature. The latter, we know, occupied the time of ancient aristocratic peoples; masters of the world they possessed palaces, crowds of slaves; whole regions of Africa were in their possession. But beneath what porticoes will you pass your meagre hours of leisure? In what vast ornate baths will you enclose the perfumes, flowers, flute-players and courtesans of Ionia? It is no Heliogabulus who requests it. Where will you find the wealth indispensable for such delightful matters? The soul is thrifty; but the body a spendthrift.

Now, a few serious comments on absolute equality: that equality would not only lead to servitude of the body, but also slavery of the soul; it would have no lesser effect than to destroy the moral and physical inequalities of individuals. Our will, in state control, under total surveillance, would see our faculties fall into disuse. Our nature, for example, partakes of the infinite; forbid our minds, or even our passions, from thinking of boundless good, and you reduce man's life to that of a snail, you metamorphose him into a machine. For, make no mistake: without the possibility of reaching the ultimate, without the idea of eternal life, the void is everywhere; without individual property no one is free; whoever has no property cannot be independent; he becomes a proletarian or a wage-earner, whether he lives in the current era of private property, or in a state of communal ownership. Common ownership would resemble society in one of those monasteries at whose gate the bursar distributed bread. Hereditary and inviolable property is our private defence; property is nothing other than *liberty*. Absolute equality which presupposes total submission to that equality would emulate the harshest slavery; it would make of the individual human being a somnolent beast, subject to constraining action, and obliged to walk the same path forever.

While I reasoned thus, Monsieur de Lamennais was attacking the same systems, from behind the bars of his gaol, with his powerful logic which enlightens with a poetic splendor. A passage from his pamphlet entitled *On the Past and Future of the People* completes my argument. Listen then, as he speaks:

*‘Of those who propose this aim of rigorous and absolute equality, the more rational ones conclude that to establish and maintain it requires force, despotism, tyranny, in one form or another.*

*The partisans of absolute equality are forced first of all to attack natural inequalities, in order to lessen or if possible eliminate them. Unable to do anything with the primary state of the organism and its development, their work begins at the moment when the child leaves its mother's breast. The State then seizes it: the State becomes the absolute master of the spiritual and organic being. Mind and conscience, both depend on the State, both are subject to it. There is an end, from then on, to family, paternity, marriage. A male, a female, children manipulated by the State, of whom it makes what it will, morally,*

*physically, a servitude universal and so profound that nothing escapes it, that it penetrates to the very soul itself.*

*As regards what concerns material things, equality cannot be established in a way the least bit permanent through simple division. If it acted alone on the earth, one can conceive the world shared out into as many portions as there are individuals; but the number of individuals perpetually varies, therefore the initial division must be perpetually changed. All private property being abolished, only the State has rights of possession. That mode of possession, if voluntary, is that of the monk constrained by his vows to poverty as to obedience; if it is not voluntary, it is that of the slave, where nothing alleviates the harshness of his conditions. All the bonds of humanity, empathetic relationships, mutual devotion, exchange of service, the free gift of self, all which constitutes the charm of life and its grandeur, all, all is gone, gone without hope of return.*

*The means proposed so far, to resolve the issue of the future of the race, constitute the negation of all the indispensable conditions of existence, destroying, either directly, or implicitly, duty, rights, and the family, and if they could be applied to society would produce, instead of liberty in which all real progress is represented, merely a servitude to which history, however far back one goes, offers nothing comparable.'*

There is nothing to add to that logic.

I do not visit prisoners, like Tartuffe, to distribute alms among them, but to enrich my mind among men more worthy than myself. Though their opinions may differ from mine, I fear nothing: a convinced Christian, all the fine geniuses on earth could not weaken my faith; I pity them, and my charity protects me from seduction. If I sin through excess, they sin by default; I understand what they understand, while they do not understand what I understand. In the same prison where once I visited the noble and unfortunate Carrel, I now visit the Abbé de Lamennais. The July Revolution has relegated to the darkness of gaol the remaining men of any superiority, whose merit it cannot judge, and whose brilliance it cannot tolerate. In the highest room, under a low roof you can touch with your hand, we fools, believers in freedom, Félicité de Lamennais and François de Chateaubriand, speak of serious matters. He has debated keenly with himself, his ideas are cast in a religious mold; the form remains Christian, though at root he is far from dogma: his words retain the heavenly tone.

Faithfully professing heresy, the author of L'Essai sur l'indifférence speaks my language using ideas that are no longer my ideas. If, after having embraced popular evangelical teaching, he had remained attached to the priesthood, he would have retained the authority that divergence destroys. The priests, the new members of the clergy (and the most distinguished among those churchmen) would have flocked to him; the bishops would be engaged in his cause if he had adhered to Gallic liberty, while venerating St. Peter's successor and defending unity.

In France, youth would have surrounded the missionary in whom they found the ideas they love and the development to which they aspire; in Europe, cautious dissidents would have been no obstacle; great Catholic nations, Poland, Ireland, Spain, would have blessed the enthusiastic preacher. Even Rome would have ended by seeing that the new evangelist would renew the domination of the Church, and furnish the oppressed Pontiff with the means of resisting the influence of absolute monarchs. What a life-force! Intellect, religion, freedom represented by a priest!

God did not wish it so; light was suddenly lacking to him who was the light; the shepherd, stealing away, has abandoned his flock in the night. To my compatriot, whose public career has been interrupted, there still remain both his private superiority and the pre-eminence of his natural gifts. In the natural order of things he should survive me; I leave it till my deathbed to carry on our great debate, at those gates one does not re-pass. I would love to see his genius grant me the absolution that his hand once had the right to bring to my brow. We were cradled at birth by the same waves; may my ardent faith and sincere admiration allow me to hope that I will meet my friend again, reconciled, on the same bank of eternity.

## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 16

The Christian ideal is the future of the world

In fact my investigations lead me to conclude that the old society is breaking up, that it is impossible for anyone not a Christian to imagine a future society pursuing its course while satisfying at the same time the purely republican ideal or the modified royalist ideal. On any hypothesis, the improvement you desire can only be grasped through Scripture.

At the heart of current secular theory, there is always plagiarism, a parody of Scripture, always the apostolic principle re-emerges: that principle is so embedded within us, that we treat it as if it belonged to us; we consider it natural, though it is not; it comes to us from our ancient faith, to give that latter two or three degrees of ascendancy over us. The free thinker who occupies himself with perfecting his fellow man would never have thought of it if the rights of man had not been formulated by the Son of Man. Every philanthropic act in which we indulge, every system we dream up to the benefit of humanity, is only a return of the Christian ideal, changed in name and too often disfigured: it is always the word made flesh!

Do you choose to say that the Christian ideal is merely the progress of the human ideal? I agree to that; but open up the various cosmogonies and you will realize that Christian revelation advanced traditional Christianity on this earth. If the Messiah *had not come* and *had not spoken*, as he himself said, the ideal would not have been clear, the truth would have remained confused, such as one sees in the writings of the ancients. So whichever way you interpret it, it is from revelation, from Christ that you possess all; it is with the Saviour, *Salvator*, the Consoler, *Paracletus*, that you must always start; it is from Him that you received the germs of civilization and philosophy.

You will see then that I find no solution for the future other than in Christianity, and Catholic Christianity; the religion of the Word is the manifestation of truth, as the creation is God made visible. I do not claim that a general renewal has taken place, since I admit that entire nations are sworn to destruction; I also admit that faith has withered in certain countries: but if there remains a single seed of grain, if it falls on a little earth, be that in the debris from a shattered vessel, that grain will grow, and a second incarnation of the Catholic spirit will re-animate society.

Christianity is the most philosophical and rational appreciation of God and the creation; it encapsulates the three great universal laws, the divine law, the moral law, the political law: the divine law, God united in three persons; the moral law, *charity*; the political law, that is to say *liberty, equality and fraternity*.

The first two principles have been discussed; the third, political law has not been furthered, because it cannot flower while intelligent belief in infinite being and universal morality are not solidly established. Now, Christianity has first to clear away the absurdities and abominations with which idolatry and slavery have encumbered the human race.

Enlightened people cannot comprehend why a Catholic such as I persists in sitting in the shadow of what they call ruins; according to such people it is an impossible stance, a simple prejudice. But tell me, out of pity where shall I find a family or a god in the individualistic and philosophic society you propose? Tell

me and I will follow you; if not then do not find fault if I lie down in Christ's tomb, the only shelter you leave me in my desolation.

No, I am not adopting an impossible position: I am sincere; this is what has happened to me: all my plans, my studies, and my experiences have disabused me completely of everything that the world pursues. My religious conviction, in growing, has consumed all my other convictions; down here, there is no more faithful Christian and no more skeptical a man than I. Far from being at an end, religion the liberator has scarcely entered its third age, the age of politics, *liberty, equality and fraternity*. Scripture, a sentence of acquittal, has not yet been read to all; we are still under the curse pronounced by Christ: *'Woe unto you...who lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers!'*

Christianity, fixed in its dogmas, is fluid in its enlightenment; its transformation encompasses the universal transformation. When it attains its highest point, the shadows will have cleared away; freedom, crucified at Calvary with the Messiah, will return with him; freedom will again grant its new testament to the nations, written for their benefit and until now hindered in its execution. Government will pass away, moral evil will vanish, and that renewal will announce the end of centuries of death and oppression born of The Fall.

When will that longed-for day occur? When will society reconstitute itself according to the least concealed of generative principles? No one can say; no one can predict the stubbornness of the passions.

Death has numbed the peoples more than once, shedding silence over events, as fallen snow smothers the noise of wheels. Nations do not grow as quickly as the individuals that compose them and do not vanish as swiftly. How much time has to pass to achieve a given thing! The agony of the Later Empire seemed never-ending; the Christian era, already so prolonged, has not sufficed to end slavery. Such calculations, I know, do not suit the French temperament; in our revolutions we never consider the element of time: that is why we are always astonished by results contrary to those we expected. Full of a generous courage, young men are in a hurry; they advance head first towards a lofty region which they glimpse and try hard to attain. Nothing is more worthy of admiration; but they waste their lives in these efforts and reaching the end, after many setbacks, they consign the weight of disillusioned years to further abused generations who carry it to the next grave; and so on. The time of the desert has returned; Christianity begins again in the barren Thebaid, in the midst of a formidable idolatry, the idolatry of man towards himself.

There are two historical consequences, one immediate and instantly known, the other more distant and not yet perceived. These consequences often contradict one another; one derives from our limited wisdom, the other from a wisdom that endures. The workings of Providence are visible after human events. God rises up behind Man. Deny the supreme counsel as much as you wish, disagree that it ever acts, quibble over words, call the power of things or reason what the vulgar call Providence, gaze at the outcome of some given event, and you will see that it has always produced the opposite effect to that intended, whenever it has not first been established in morality and justice.

If Heaven has not pronounced its Last Judgement; if a future is to exist, a powerful and free future, that future is still far off, far beyond the visible horizon; it can only be reached with the aid of that Christian hope whose wings spread wider the more all seems to deny it, a hope more permanent than time and stronger than adversity.

## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 17

#### A Recapitulation of my life

*(This section has been shortened to avoid duplicating the 1833 Preface)*

Will this work inspired by my ashes and destined for my ashes survive me? It may be that my work is bad; it may be that these *Memoirs* will fade in the light of day: at least the things I have recounted to myself will have served to beguile the tedium of these last hours which no one wants and which one does not know how to employ. The end of life is a bitter time; nothing pleases because one is worthy of knowing; useful to none, a burden to all, near our last resting-place it takes only a step to reach it: what point is there in dreaming on a desert shore? What delightful shadows could one glimpse in the future? Fie on the clouds now hovering above my head!

One idea returns to trouble me: my conscience is uneasy regarding the innocence of my nightly labors; I fear the effects of my blindness and man's indulgence towards his faults. Is what I have written in accord with true justice? Have morality and charity been carefully observed? Had I the right to speak of others? What use would my repentance be, if these *Memoirs* did harm? All you, unknown and obscure on earth, you whose lives pleasing to religion work miracles, hail to your secret virtues!

Some poor man deprived of knowledge, one whom no one will ever care about, has exerted on his companions in suffering, solely by his moral stance, that divine influence which emanated from Christ's virtues. The finest book in the world is not worth a single unknown act of those nameless martyrs whose blood Herod mingled with that of their sacrifices.

You have seen my birth; you have seen my childhood, my idolatry of my strange creation in the Château of Combourg, my presentation at Versailles, and my presence in Paris in the first throes of the Revolution. In the New World I met Washington; I plunged into the forests; shipwreck overtook me on the coast of my native Brittany. Then my sufferings as a soldier transpired, and my poverty as an emigrant. Returning to France I became the author of Le Génie du Christianisme. In a changed society, I made and lost friends. Bonaparte halted me, and threw himself across my path with the bloodstained body of the Duc d'Enghien; I halted in turn, and led the great man from his cradle, in Corsica, to his grave, on St. Helena. I participated in the Restoration and saw its end.

Thus I have known public and private life. I have crossed the sea four times; I have followed the sun in the East, touched the ruins of Memphis, Carthage, Sparta and Athens; I have prayed at St. Peter's tomb and worshipped on Golgotha. Poor and rich, powerful and weak, happy and miserable, a man of action and a man of thought, I have given my hand to the century and my mind to the desert; real life has revealed itself to me in the midst of illusion, as land appears to sailors amidst the clouds. If those events, whose tide covered my dreams like the varnish which preserves fragile paintings, are not forgotten, they will mark the places through which my life has passed.



## BOOK XLII

### CHAPTER 18

A summary of the changes which have occurred around the globe in my lifetime

Our grasp of geography has changed entirely since the day when, according to our old saying, *I could see the heavens from my bed*. If I were to compare terrestrial globes, one from the start of my life, the other from my end, the former is almost unrecognizable. Australia, a fifth part of the land surface has been discovered and peopled: a sixth continent has just been visited by French ships through the polar ice of the Antarctic, and Parry, Ross and Franklin, at our pole, have rounded the coasts which mark the northern limits of America; the mysterious solitudes of Africa have been revealed; ultimately there is not a corner of our world that will remain truly unknown. People are tackling all the languages of the countries into which the world is divided; soon we will doubtless see vessels passing through the Isthmus of Panama and perhaps the Isthmus of Suez.

Historians have made parallel discoveries in the depths of time; sacred languages have yielded their forgotten vocabularies; on the granites of Egypt, Champollion has deciphered those hieroglyphs which seemed like a seal on the lips of the desert, which responded to their eternal discretion. What if fresh revolutions have erased Poland, Holland, Genoa and Venice from the map, other republics occupy part of the coast of the great Ocean and the Atlantic. In those lands, advanced civilization will lend its aid to energetic natures: steamships will mount those rivers destined to provide easy communications, where they were once invincible obstacles; the shores of those rivers will be covered with towns and villages, as we have seen a new American State emerge from the wastes of Kentucky. Through those forests, reputed to be impenetrable, vehicles, not horses, will run, transporting enormous weights and thousands of travellers. Down those rivers, down those roads, will come timber for the construction of vessels, and the output of the mines which will pay for them; and the Isthmus of Panama will open its locks to grant passage to the vessels of both seas.

The Navy, using steam-power, is not limited to rivers, it has the freedom of the Ocean; distances are shortened; no more currents, monsoons, contrary winds, blockades and closed ports. They were far from such industrial romances in the hamlet of Plancoët: in those days, the ladies played the games of yesteryear by their hearth; peasants would spin hemp to make clothes; feeble resin candles lit the wakeful village; chemistry had not produced its prodigies; machines had not set in motion the water and steel to weave cloth or embroider silk; gas, associated with meteors, had not yet furnished illumination for our streets and theatres.

These transformations are not limited to our planet: with immortal instincts, man has set his intellect soaring; at every step he makes through the firmament, he recognizes miracles of ineffable power. That star, which seemed simple to our forefathers, is double or triple to our eyes; suns interposed before suns obscure each other and lack space for their multitudes. In the center of the infinite, God sees these magnificent constructs pass before him, proof on proof of the Supreme Being.

Let us conceive, according to our new science, our little planet swimming in an ocean whose waves are stars, in that Milky Way, raw matter of light, fused metal of worlds that the hand of the Creator will fashion. The distance to such stars is so prodigious that their light only reaches the eye that sees them after they have been extinguished, their fires lost before their rays. How small man is on this little atom

where he dies! But how great his intelligence! He knows when the face of the stars must be masked in darkness, when the comets will return after thousands of years, he who lasts only an instant! A microscopic insect lost in a fold of the heavenly robe, the orbs cannot hide from him a single one of their movements in the depth of space. What destinies will those stars, new to us, light? Is their revelation bound up with some new phase of humanity? You will know, race to be born; I know not, and I am departing.

Thanks to the superfluity of my years, my monument is finished. It is a great solace to me; I felt someone urging me on: the captain of the vessel in which my seat is reserved was warning me that I had only a moment left to board. If I had been master of Rome, I would have said, like Sulla, that I was completing my *Memoirs* on the very eve of my death; but I would not have concluded my story with the words he uses in concluding his: *'In a dream I have seen one of my children who pointed to Metella, his mother, and exhorted me to come and rest in the bosom of eternal happiness.'* If I had been Sulla, glory would never have allowed me rest and happiness.

New storms will arise; one can believe in calamities to come which will surpass the afflictions we have been overwhelmed by in the past; already, men are thinking of bandaging their old wounds to return to the battlefield. However, I do not expect an imminent outbreak of war: nations and kings are equally weary; unforeseen catastrophe will not yet fall on France: what follows me will only be the effect of general transformation. No doubt there will be painful moments: the face of the world cannot change without suffering. But, once again, there will be no separate revolutions; simply the great revolution approaching its end. The scenes of tomorrow no longer concern me; they call for other artists: your turn, gentlemen!

As I write these last words, my window, which looks west over the gardens of the Foreign Mission, is open: it is six in the morning; I can see the pale and swollen moon; it is sinking over the spire of the Invalides, scarcely touched by the first golden glow from the East; one might say that the old world was ending, and the new beginning. I behold the light of a dawn whose sunrise I shall never see. It only remains for me to sit down at the edge of my grave; then I shall descend boldly, crucifix in hand, into eternity.

### **The End of the *Memoirs***